SCANDAL

By COSMO HAMILTON

AUTHOR OF

"THE BLINDNESS OF VIRTUE"

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SCANDAL

By COSMO HAMILTON

Beatrix Vanderdyke was extraordinarily rich, extraordinarily beautiful, extraordinarily charming, and extraordinarily foolish. Her habit of making night time visits to the studio of a portrait painter resulted in scandal. Beatrix's family threatened her with banishment to a cottage in Maine, and to save her face, she took advantage of Pelham Franklin's arrival to perpetrate the crowning audacity of her career. "Play up," she whispered, "oh, please play up!" and then announced her secret marriage to him. Franklin played up—but in a most surprising manner, for he was determined to teach Beatrix a lesson. How he did it makes a thoroughly enjoyable story.

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SCANDAL

Fraser immediately became the object of Beatrix' whole attention. FRONTISPIECE. *See page 192.*

SCANDAL

A NOVEL

BY

COSMO HAMILTON

AUTHOR OF
SINS OF THE CHILDREN, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
RICHARD CULTER

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"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear (believe the aged friend),
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,—
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is."

ROBERT BROWNING.

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SCANDAL

I

"By Jove, there's Beatrix Vanderdyke!"

"Why not?"

"What on earth is she doing in New York at this time of year?"

There was a laugh and a shrug. "If it comes to that, my dear fellow, what on earth are *we* doing in New York at this time of year? Anyway, I'm not interested."

"I am. She's with that unpleasant brute, Sutherland York again. I wish to Heaven she wouldn't go about with a second-rate portrait painter who only gets commissions by licking people's boots, or any other man, for the matter of that, at this time of night."

Pelham Franklin laughed. "I'm sorry I can't squeeze up any interest in Miss Vanderdyke," he said. "I've seen her going into York's studio round about midnight several times, but it's her life. She has to lead it. There's no accounting for tastes, you know. You and I, for instance, have a penchant for the Ziegfeld Follies. I vote we walk, it's a little cooler now."

And as the only son of the famous millionaire Franklin, sauntered away with his friend, Sutherland York, the "unpleasant brute," followed Miss Vanderdyke into the elevator.

York had cultivated a peculiar habit of looking at a woman as though she were the only one alive, and by doing so had achieved a list of clients which made the mouth of every other portrait painter in New York water with envy. He also had a way, which amounted to a gift, of running his eyes over women which made them feel that they had nothing on. It caused some to shudder, some to preen themselves, and some — the coarser, indelicate type — to feel a pleasant thrill of excitement. Like many men who paint portraits for a living, Sutherland York had discovered that in order to pay the rent of a very expensive apartment, keep a man, dress to perfection and dine frequently at Sherry's and the Ritz, it is necessary to know something more than how to paint. Women were his clients. They provided him with his butter as well as his bread, and he catered to them with artfulness rather than with art. Miss Vanderdyke came in for all this man's eye-play in the elevator, but without a flicker of a lash bore up against it.

The city had baked beneath a hot June sun that day. The night was airless and oppressive. Beatrix dropped her cloak and went over to one of the open windows and stood there with the discreet lights showing up the smooth whiteness of her shoulders, arms and back. Her dress was one of those so-called smart things that one sees in the windows of fashionable

shops which affect French names. It left very little to the imagination and was as short as it was low. In between it was ugly and foolish, and required a very beautiful young body to live it down and put a check on the ribald laughter of sane people. On the other side of Fifth Avenue the Plaza, with its multitudinous windows all gleaming, reared its head up to the clear sky. Along the glistening street below intermittent automobiles glided like black beetles. The incessant hum of the city came like music to the girl's ears. She preferred that sound to the God-sent quietude of the country from which she had just come.

While a bottle of champagne was opened and cigarettes were placed on the table, York stood with his back against a heavily carved oak armoire in an attitude of carefully considered gracefulness and watched the girl with a sense of extreme triumph. The fact that she was young — very young,— not very much more than twenty,— and was generally acknowledged as having been the most beautiful débutante who had come out in New York society in many years, did not matter. He had painted her portrait and had quieted his numerous trades-people with a certain portion of the very substantial cheque which he had received, but that also did not matter. What did matter was the fact that he, himself, had proved attractive to a Vanderdyke — to the only daughter of the man whose name was known all over the world as the head of one of the richest and certainly the most exclusive family in the United States, whose house on Fifth Avenue contained art treasures which

made it more notable than the houses of European royalty, and whose country places with their racing stables, their kennels, their swimming pools and tennis courts, golf courses and polo grounds were the pride of all the little eager people who write society paragraphs. It meant a good deal to the son of the man who had kept a dusty-looking antique shop with dirty windows on Fourth Avenue to be able to assure himself that he exercised enough attraction over this girl to make her run the risk of gossip in order to spend a few stolen hours from time to time in his company alone. With the use of consummate tact, his well-practiced flattery, and at the right moment a sudden outburst of passionate words culled from the works of Byron and Swinburne, what might he not achieve!

As these thoughts ran through his brain he turned to the oval glass in an Italian frame that hung on the wall and looked at himself with close examination. He certainly wore his forty-seven years admirably well. His dark, thick, wavy hair was all the more picturesque for its sprinkling of white. His high forehead lent him an air of intellectuality which was most misleading. His straight, black eyebrows and large, almond-shaped eyes gave him a Latin touch which seemed to indicate temperament. His nose, he told himself, was undoubtedly aristocratic, and his moustache — scrupulously lifted away from his lip — added to the effect of a well-shaped mouth and large white, regular teeth. There was a slit in his chin of which he had always been proud. Striking was the

word that he applied to himself, and handsome was the one which he knew was generally used about him. The touch of humor which was his saving grace made him very well aware of the fact that with any clothes less well cut and carefully considered he might easily fall in line with the glossy villain of melodrama or with the conventional desperado so necessary to the producers of moving pictures.

With fingers as expert as those of a woman he smoothed his hair here and there, made a quick sign to his man to get out, and moved across the expensively rugged studio to the window. "I was on the point of going out to supper," he said, "when you called me up. It was very kind of you."

Beatrix turned towards him with the most disconcerting air of candor. Not for the first time he was astonished at her perfect finish, her audacious self-possession. This baby was a complete woman of the world. "No, it wasn't," she said. "I was bored. I only got to town at half-past eight and the mere thought of spending the evening with a garrulous companion — a sort of toothless watch-dog — in a house among Holland covers and the persistent smell of camphor was more than I could stand. I had no intention of being kind. Do we smoke?"

"Oh, please!" he said.

She followed him across the large, lofty room to the refectory table which had stood in the back room of the shop on Fourth Avenue for so many years, there acquiring all the age of which it could boast. A silver Jacobean box was open and in it there were Rus-

sian cigarettes upon which York's imaginary crest had been stamped. He had himself designed it.

"Thank you. How is it that you're here? The last time I saw you, you said you were going to Gloucester for the summer."

York put his face as near to the girl's round shoulder as he dared. "I went there," he said, "on the last of April, but I had to come back last week to see the architects of a new theatre. They've asked me to paint a series of panels for the foyer. It's a nuisance; but — although I dare say it's never occurred to you — there are some people in the world who must work to live." He raised his glass, adopted an expression of adoration in which there was a mixture of humbleness and confidence, and added: "I'd have come from the ends of the earth for the pleasure of seeing you to-night."

Beatrix looked at him with a smile of amused appreciation. "How well you do that sort of thing," she said. "Better than any man I know. Was it born in you, or did you achieve it?"

York placed what purported to be a Wolsey chair just out of the line of light thrown by a lamp on the table, and metaphorically hauled himself up for having gone a little too far. This imperious girl, as spoiled as a Royal Princess, who had been brought up in the belief that all she had to do was to put her finger on a bell to bring the moon and the sun and the stars to her service, needed more careful handling than a thoroughbred yearling. So York, whose business had taught him far more than the rudiments of psychology,

hastened to become general again. Like the filibuster who starts out on an expedition to find hidden treasure, he had always before him the vague, exciting hope that some day he might stand towards this girl in a very different relationship. "How long are you to be in the city?"

"I must go back the day after to-morrow," said Beatrix. "I've only come in to see about a costume for a Shakespeare Pastoral that mother has arranged to give in the Queen Anne gardens. It's going to be produced by one of the long-haired tribe, and the house-party's to be assisted by a sprinkling of professionals. As it'll break the monotony of country life I'm looking forward to it, especially as I'm going to play opposite,— I think that's the word,— to a matinée idol whose profile is Grecian, though his accent is Broadway. You must come and see us."

"I should love to," said York. His interest in pastorals was infinitesimal, but his desire to be included in one of Mrs Vanderdyke's house-parties was as keen as that of any woman whose whole life is devoted to the difficult gymnastic feat of climbing into society. "When d'you begin rehearsing?"

"The day after to-morrow. The people who are at home at present scattered to-day and the new lot, or many of them, will probably go by train on Wednesday. Pelham Franklin is to be there. D'you know him?"

"Very slightly," said York. "He lives in the twin studio to this, on the other side, but as he is mostly

away, either in Europe or big game hunting, there has been very little opportunity for us to meet. I caught sight of him just now leaving the house. He's a good-looking fellow, isn't he?"

"Is he? Yes, I suppose he is. I've met him once or twice and danced with him, but it struck me that he needed some sort of crisis in his life to shake him into becoming a man. At present he's a sort of undergraduate, skimming through life with his feet above the earth. I believe mother entertains secret hopes that he'll one day ask me to marry him." She laughed. "I hear her talking about the union of the two families as though they were the only two families in the world. Aunt Honoria is all in favor of it, too. The question of my marriage seems to affect them as though I were the daughter of King George or someone. Who would suppose that we live in a democracy? It's a joke, isn't it? Probably I shall run away with a good-looking chauffeur with kinky hair, regular teeth, a straight nose and a vocabulary which would put even George Ade to shame. Or, I may fall in love with the matinée idol and fly off with him in a motor-car at midnight, and so be in the fashion. My romantic-minded companion, Mrs. Lester Keene, who lives on novels, cherishes the idea that I'm going to elope with you."

"My God!" cried York. "If only such a thing could come true!"

The passion in the man's voice, the sudden flame in his eyes and the sort of picturesque hunger which suddenly pervaded him filled the girl with interest. She

had always regarded him as a sort of Shaw play,—a mixture of easy cynicism, self-conscious cleverness and an obvious pose. She had been leading a quiet life since the season in town had ended, riding and playing tennis and swimming in the pool. She had had no opportunity of trying her powers upon any man who had been worth while. Her parents' friends were all rather pompous, responsible people who talked politics gravely and whose wealth had taken the sting of joy and effort out of life. It was good to be able to play with fire again. It exercised her wits. So she seized the opportunity of leading on this handsome person with whom so many married women had been in love, to see what he would do.

"Is that how you feel?" she asked, instinctively going into the light so that her slim triumphant beauty and bewitching youth should be in full challenging view.

York lost his head. His inherent conceit led him to believe that there was encouragement in the girl's voice and attitude. "You know it is. You know that ever since you came here to sit for me, from the very first instant that I caught sight of you I've been drunk with love. You've revolutionized my life — almost ruined me as painter — because to paint any other woman is sacrilege." He caught her hands and kissed them hotly.

It was all very well done. His words carried most amazing sincerity. His attitude was extremely graceful, and his simulated passion lent a temporary youthfulness to his face and tall, tightly compressed figure.

He managed to look the complete lover. The stage had lost a great actor in him.

Beatrix rescued her hands and stood up very straight. This transpontine outburst was foolish. She had merely hoped for a witty passage of arms. "My dear Mr. York," she said, "you and I are very good friends. Please don't run away with the idea that I'm a young married woman in search of adventure."

York was angry. He knew that he had made a fool of himself. He hated to look a fool at any time and he was not sufficiently master of himself to recover his ground by making a well-turned apology. "Women don't come here to be friends," he said thickly. "They certainly don't come alone at this time of night to talk ethics. You've no right to snub me — to lead me on and then cover me with ice-cold water. I'm not the man to stand that sort of thing."

"Your cigarettes are very nice," said Beatrix. "May I have another?"

He held out the box and struck a match. He stood so close to the girl that the fragrance of her hair and the gleam of her white flesh went to his brain. All the sensuality of the man was churned up and stirred and his veneer fell from him like dry plaster. He really did forget for the moment that she was the daughter of one of America's richest men and was not simply the most exquisite young thing that he had ever seen during his long career. He bent down and put his lips on her shoulder, with a hoarse, inarticulate murmur. He had always been very successful in his

love-making. The type of woman with whom he came most in contact couldn't resist the primeval. He must have imagined that this unbridled and daring outbreak would carry the girl off her feet. It had happened before.

He was mistaken. Beatrix was as completely mistress of herself as though she were talking to a hairdresser.

"That's a pity," she said. "I'm afraid it puts an end to my coming here. I'm sorry, because I liked the atmosphere of your studio and it broke the monotony of my gilded exclusiveness to indulge in this sort of mild Bohemianism, although I thought that you were clever. Will you please let me have my wrap?"

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

York obeyed. He saw that he had completely spoiled his very remote chance. Also it was obvious that his name would not now be included among Mrs. Vanderdyke's list of guests. "You fool!" he said to himself. "You damned infernal fool. This girl's an aristocrat — an autocrat — a hot-house plant. You've treated her like the wife of a Wall Street broker from the Middle West." He put the wrap about the girl's shoulders and stood back endeavoring to assume a dignity that he did not feel.

That kiss on her shoulder was like the touch of a slug on the petal of a rose. Beatrix resented it from the bottom of her soul, but her training, her breeding and her inherent pluck gave her the power to hide her feelings and maintain an air of undisturbed indiffer-

ence. Her knowledge of men, already great, made her very well aware of the fact that the least show of temper might bring about a most unpleasant scuffle. She dropped her cigarette into a silver bowl. "I shall look forward to seeing your panels in the new theatre with great interest," she said. "Will you come down with me to the car?"

Realizing that he was no match for this young privileged person and cowed by her superbly unconscious sense of quality, York led the way across his elaborate studio in which suits of armor gleamed dully and massive pieces of oak reflected the light, to the door. He rang the bell of the elevator and stood silently waiting for it to come up. Nothing else was said, except by Beatrix, who gave him the one cool word "Goodbye," as he shut the door of the limousine.

York's man-servant, of whom he was so inordinately proud, had gone to bed. Otherwise, he would have been astonished to hear the sound of smashing china. The portrait painter took it out on a Dresden bowl which, in his impotent rage, he dashed with a characteristically coarse oath to the polished floor of the room in which most of his love episodes had ended with peculiar success.

II

The Vanderdyke house on Fifth Avenue faced the Park.

It aroused the admiration of most people not because it was an accurate reproduction of the famous De la Rochefoucauld mansion in Paris, but because on one side of it enough space upon which to build a high apartment house was given up to a stilted garden behind a high arrangement of wrought iron. It did not require a trained real-estate mind to know how valuable was such "waste" ground.

The suite of rooms belonging to Beatrix overlooked this large, square patch, with its well-nursed lawn, its elaborate stonework and its particular sparrows. In the spring, what appeared to be the same tulips suddenly and regularly appeared, standing erect in exact circles, and lilacs broke into almost regal bloom every year about the time that the family left town. A line of balloon-shaped bay trees always stood on the terrace and, whatever the weather, a nude maiden of mature charms watched over a marble fountain in an attitude of resentful modesty.

When her windows were open, as they mostly were, Beatrix and her English companion could hear the pathetic whimpers of the poor caged beasts in the Zoo in front of the house, and the raucous cries of

the semitic-looking parrots above the ceaseless cantata of motor traffic.

The morning after her lucky escape from York's studio, Beatrix slept late. Mrs. Lester Keene had breakfasted alone with the *Times,* saving *Town Topics* for her final cup of coffee. She had heard her charge, whom she made no effort to manage, return comparatively early the night before, and could hardly contain her curiosity to know what had happened. It was obvious that something had taken place, because, as a rule, Beatrix came back anywhere between one and two from her visits to the portrait painter. From a sense of duty and a fear of losing her comfortable position, Mrs. Lester Keene forced herself to remain awake on these occasions, sitting over a novel in a Jaeger dressing-gown or writing a long, rambling letter to a friend in London, in which, with tearful pride in her former independence, she wallowed in reminiscence.

Mrs. Lester Keene was the widow of a man of excellent family who had devoted all the best years of his life to the easy and too-well-paid pursuit of winding and unwinding "red tape" in a government office in London. He had died of it before he could retire to a stucco house at Brighton on a pension, and Amelia Keene had found herself in the tragic position of being alone in the world in the middle forties with nothing to bless herself with but an aged pomeranian, her undisputed respectability and the small sum paid to her on her husband's life policy. This, with the laudable and optimistic idea of placing herself forever

out of the reach of the lean hand of penury, she had entrusted to the care of a glib city shark whom she had met in a boarding-house and who guaranteed that he would get her in on the ground floor of a new company exploiting the Eldorado Copper Mine and bring her in a regular three hundred and fifty-five per cent. on her capital. With this neat sum and others, however, the expert philanthropist with the waxed moustache and white spats paid his first-class fare to the Argentine and set up a matrimonial bureau for temperamental South Americans. Poor Amelia Keene sold her modest jewels and applied for work at the Employment Agency for Impoverished Gentlewomen, in George Street, Hanover Square.

It so happened that Mr. and Mrs. Vanderdyke were in London at that time and in need of a refined companion for their only daughter. Mrs. Lester Keene was one of the several dozen applicants and had the great good fortune to secure the much coveted post owing to the fact that her hair was grey, her complexion her own and her accent irreproachably Kensington. As Mrs. Vanderdyke intended to be the only made-up woman in any of her numerous houses, the other applicants were naturally turned down.

Like most English people the new companion had never been farther away from her native land than Boulogne. She thrilled with excitement, fright and the spirit of adventure when she joined the Vanderdyke entourage on board the *Olympic*. To be five or six days at sea was in itself an almost unbelievable exploit, full of hidden dangers and obvious terrors. The

mere thought of shipwreck and the possibility of floating for days on a raft, in perhaps most unconventional attire, appalled her. But the thing that filled her nightly dreams with phantasmagoria was the knowledge that she was, God and the elements willing, to live in the United States,— a great wild country in which, she had been led to believe, men shot each other in the fashionable restaurants, broncho busters galloped madly along the principal streets of the big cities and lassoed helpless virgins, murderers in masks held up trains, black men were hanged to lamp-posts, as a matter of course, and comic creatures with large feet hammered people on the head with mallets. She had arrived at this point of view from several visits to the moving picture theatres in London, where American films do much to prejudice untravelled Europeans against the United States. Her astonishment when finally she arrived in New York and found herself in what she described to her friends at home as the Vanderdyke Palace, was almost childish.

In no sense of the word was she a companion to Beatrix. Her narrow and insular point of view, her characteristic English method of clinging to shibboleths and rococo ideas, and her complete and triumphant ignorance of all fundamental things made her, to Beatrix, more of a curiosity, like an early Victorian stuffed canary in a glass case, than a useful and helpful person. Beatrix had been born sophisticated. As a child and a young girl her arresting and palpable beauty had made her an irresistible mark for boys and young men, and one or two only of her early episodes,

nearly all of which began well enough but ended in sometimes very rough attempts at seduction, would have crowded out of Mrs. Lester Keene's whole humdrum, drone-like life every incident that she could recall. Beatrix at once became her companion's guide, philosopher, friend and guardian, and derived constant amusement from the little garrulous, plump, hen-like woman, who knew no more about life than the average dramatist knows about people, and who, though completely dazzled by the hard, almost casual magnificence of her present surroundings, delighted to live in the past, telling long and pointless stories of "my house in Clanricarde Gardens, you know," "Mrs. Billings, my cook," "The summer when Algernon and I took the Edward Jones's house at Bognor," "My drawing-room was always crowded every second and fourth Thursday, quite a Salon, in fact," and so on, in a glorification of the commonplace that was as pathetic as it was tiresome.

Before Mrs. Keene had waded through the first few pages of her favorite weekly paper, a maid disturbed her. "Miss Vanderdyke would be glad to see you," she said, conveying the kindly but nevertheless royal command with full appreciation.

Mrs. Lester Keene was glad to obey. Even if dear Beatrix had nothing exciting to tell her, *she* had a very curious piece of news to impart to dear Beatrix. So she gathered herself together, rather in the same way as her prototype, the barnyard hen rising from a bath of sun-baked earth, and made her way along a wide passage hung with the priceless old prints which

had overflowed from the lower rooms, to the bedroom of the daughter of the house.

Beatrix was sitting on the edge of a four-post bed, in a pink, transparent nightgown, her little feet in heelless slippers. On a table at her elbow there was a just placed breakfast tray and a new copy of *Town and Country*. Fresh from sleep, with her fair hair all about her shoulders, Beatrix, the one alive and exquisite thing in that too-large, too-lofty, pompous room, looked like a single rosebud in a geometrically designed garden.

"Come along, Brownie," she said, stretching herself with catlike grace, "and talk to me while I feed."

"You'll put something on, dear, won't you?"

"No, dear Brownie, I won't. No one can spy into the room and there isn't a single portrait of a man on the walls. So please don't fuss. It's far too hot for a dressing-gown and in my case why should I hide my charms from you?" She laughed at her wholly justified conceit, gave herself a very friendly nod in a pier-glass in the distance and poured out a cup of coffee.

Amelia Keene could never at any time, even in her isolated spinster days in the heart of the country, have brought herself to wear such an excuse for a nightgown. Flannel was her wear. She was, as usual, more than a little uneasy at the all-conquering individualism and supreme naturalness of the girl to whom she utterly subjected herself. With the slightest shrug of her shoulders,— she dared to do nothing further, — she put the dressing-gown that she had offered

back in its place, and sat down. At any rate she could assure herself that she had endeavored to do her duty.

"You came in earlier than I expected last night, dear," she said, throwing the obvious bait of her insatiable curiosity.

Beatrix laughed again. "Why don't you say that you're dying to know what happened and lay awake all night making up exciting stories, Brownie?"

Mrs. Keene almost succeeded in looking dignified. "You know that I'm very, very much against these late visits to bachelor rooms," she said, "and have always done my best to dissuade you from making them. Therefore I can truly say that I'm far from being curious and am unable to feel any sort of excitement."

Beatrix bent forward and touched her companion's cheek with an affectionate hand. "Good for you, dear old wise-acre. *You'll* never have to take any blame for my blazing indiscretions, so don't worry, and as you don't feel any interest in my adventures I won't bother you with them."

Keen disappointment took the place of dignity. "I hope the time will never come," said Mrs. Keene, "when you'll cease to make me your confidante, dear."

Feeling that she had teased the little, naïve, narrow-minded, well-meaning and very human woman enough, Beatrix finished her coffee and lit a cigarette. "Last night, Sutherland York dropped his pose," she said. "I hadn't ever taken the trouble to analyze the reason why I went to his studio, but thinking it over now

I see that it was because I knew that sooner or later his assumption of super-refined Bohemianism would break down and I wanted to be there to see the smash. Well, dear Brownie, I saw it. I also heard it and, to go into the exact details, I felt it,— on my shoulder." She put her right hand on the spot as though the touch of his sensual lips still stung her.

Amelia Keene gasped. "You don't mean that he kissed ——"

"Yes, I do. Just here. I think of consulting a specialist on the matter."

"My dear!"

Beatrix got up, walked across the wide room and stood in front of the pier-glass. Through her thin, clinging nightgown she could see the lines of her slim, lithe, deliciously young form. For a moment she stood in frank and open admiration of it. She had a keenly appreciative eye for beautiful things. Then she walked about the room, like a young Diana, her heels rapping as she went. "It wasn't so amusing as I hoped it might be," she added. "Scratch a gentleman and you find the man. Break the veneer of a cad and you discover the beast. D'you think that Pond's Extract is strong enough to cleanse the spot?"

"He dared to kiss *you!*—— I can hardly believe it." Mrs. Keene looked like a pricked balloon. "Surely you'll never go near him again now."

"Only if I can get a policeman to go with me, or an inspector of nuisances. Brownie, dear, my occasional evenings with art and old armor are over. I

must find some other excuse for breaking all the rules that hedge round the life of an ex-débutante."

"Thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Keene. "I've only seen that man once and he reminded me of a person who used to go down the area of my London house and try and persuade the maids to buy imitation jewelry on the instalment plan."

Beatrix burst into a ripple of laughter. "Well done, Brownie. That's perfect,— perfect." But again her hand went up to her shoulder.

And then the hen-like lady gathered her scattered wits together and came up to her own little surprise. "It's quite time that episode is at an end, my dear," she said. "Only about ten minutes after you drove away last night,— I was having a sandwich and a glass of port wine before going to my room,— your Aunt Honoria bore down upon me. May I say that without giving offense?"

Beatrix drew up short. "Aunt Honoria!"

"Yes; she came straight up to these apartments, looking more like a beautiful eagle than ever,— my heart fell straight into my boots,— and asked, or rather demanded to see you."

"Aunt Honoria! But yesterday she was staying with the Mordens at Morristown."

Mrs. Keene was delighted to find that she held a full hand. "I said that you were out. My dear, she didn't take my word for it. She marched, or rather sailed along the passage to your room and stabbed your empty bed with her long, thin fingers. Of course I followed. Then she turned to me and

said: 'Where is she?' I'm sure she didn't add 'woman,' but she as good as did. She always does. I was terrified. I felt like a shop-lifter before the Lord Chief Justice. She always reminds me of a great legal dignitary with her snow-white hair and aquiline nose and the cold, direct gaze."

"Thank you, Brownie, dear, for your very charming literary touch, but please go on." Beatrix was really interested and curious. Her Aunt Honoria Vanderdyke, the outstanding figure in New York's most exclusive society, at whose entrance into her box at the opera the whole house very nearly rose to its feet, did nothing without a very strong motive.

"I tried to tell a lie — I did indeed — but somehow it stuck in my throat. Under those two mind-searching eyes I *had* to say that you had driven away with Mr. Sutherland York."

"Well, this is interesting!"

"'Ah!' she said. 'Indeed! And how often has Miss Vanderdyke stained herself with the paint of that mountebank?' 'I really do not know,' I replied. 'Thank you,' she said. 'That will do,' and went, or rather floated out of your bedroom and along the passage. I watched her from the gallery as she went down-stairs and through the door and away. A wonderful woman! If only Queen Elizabeth had been a lady she might have looked like her. I honestly confess, my dear ——"

Beatrix held up one pink-nailed finger. "Brownie," she said, "I feel in my bones that there is going to be a row in the family. I've been seen going into York's

studio, Aunt Honoria has been informed! She heard that I had come to town,— came to spy ——"

"Oh, not spy, dear. She could never spy!"

"No, that's true. Inquire first hand, then,— and has now gone home to ——"

The telephone bell rang. Beatrix's eyes gleamed with fun and a sort of impish amusement. "Brownie, I'll bet you any money you like that that's mother!"

Mrs. Keene rose. "Oh, no, my dear. Why should it be? It's the dressmaker, of course." All the same she hesitated apprehensively.

"Well, I'll bet you. The row is simmering."

Mrs. Keene nearly dropped the receiver. "It *is* your mother," she said. "She asks for you. And, oh dear me, how icy her voice is!"

Before going to the telephone, Beatrix lit another cigarette, gave a tilt to a comfortable arm-chair that stood near the little table, sat down, crossed one round leg over the other in a most leisurely way and took up the instrument. She looked like a water-color by Van Beers come to life.

"Good morning, Mamma! How sweet of you to call me up — I shall be glad to get away from the glare of the streets and reek of gasoline, but I can't leave until to-morrow. I must try on my costume twice before then — I'm very sorry, Mamma, darling, but — Well, give father my love and tell him that he simply must curb his impatience to see me, because it's absolutely necessary — Aunt Honoria! Is Aunt Honoria there?" She shot a wink at Amelia Keene, who stood in an attitude of piteous trepidation. "My

very best love to Aunt Honoria. But it will be impossible for me to leave town at once. Well, then, expect to see me at tea to-morrow. Au revoir, Mamma. I wish I could stay for a longer chat, but I'm just on my way out, with so much to do."

She rang off and burst out laughing. "A very good thing you were not betting, Brownie."

"Did Mrs. Vanderdyke sound ——?"

"Angry? Yes, in a white heat. Every word was like a grain of Cayenne pepper."

"And is it about last night?"

"Yes, obviously, and probably the others. There has been a family council, that's easy to guess. Scandal has been at work. Isn't it absurd?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Keene, who dreaded disturbances, would do anything in her power to keep trouble away from her charge, to whom she was genuinely attached, and saw starvation facing her if she were to lose her position. "How very unfortunate and distressing all this is! And, oh, my dear, how *could* you talk to your mother like that?"

"My dear good Brownie," said Beatrix, tipping off the end of her cigarette, "what's the use of belonging to this generation if I can't keep my parents in their place?"

She was just the least little bit disappointed that her companion failed to catch her touch of satirical humor.

III

At the moment when her maid was getting a bath ready for Beatrix and was waiting in a white marble room filled with the pleasant aroma of scented bath salts, Pelham Franklin wandered into the dining room of his studio apartment with his friend, Malcolm Fraser. Both men were in pajamas, and even then welcomed the occasional soft puff of air that came through the open window. Another hot day had fallen upon the city and a blistering sun was already high in a cloudless sky.

The dining room, like the studio and the passages, was filled with antlered heads and stuffed tarpon, and the skins of bear and tiger and wild-cat. There was something finely and healthily inartistic about the whole place, which more nearly resembled the work-rooms of a naturalist than anything else. The same note was struck by Franklin, who, with his broad shoulders and deep chest, his six feet of wiry body and small head, was obviously nothing but a man and not one who had ever been accused of being handsome either. He shuddered at the word except when it was applied to the royal mate of a fallow deer. All the same, he caught all discriminating eyes for the shortness of his thick, dark hair, the cleanness and humor of his grey, deep-set eyes, the rather aggressive

squareness of his jaw, the small, soldierly moustache that covered a short upper lip and the strong, white teeth that gleamed beneath it when he laughed or was very angry. He had the look, too, of a man who mostly sleeps out under the sky, and the sun-baked skin of one who is not chained to a city or doomed to the petty slavery of the social push.

"This damned city," he said. "This time eight days ago we were well out to sea. If I hadn't been ass enough to put the yacht back for another stock of tobacco the mail would have waited and grown stale. Rotten bad luck, eh?"

Fraser grinned ironically. "If it was a question of my having to chuck a few fish and give up two or three weeks of the open sea to come to the city to see about adding a million or two to my capital, d'you think I'd grumble?"

"But you're such a mercenary brute. You think of nothing but money."

"Yes, and the only reason you're not mercenary is that you don't have to think about it. Thanks, I'll have a sausage. What are you going to do to-day?"

Franklin groaned. "Sign deeds and things most of the morning at the lawyer's, having tried to make out what the devil they mean, and after lunch I'm going to buy a Rolls Royce. Say why?"

"I was going to say why."

"Well, I say why not?"

"But you've got five cars already. You don't want another."

"My dear chap, don't rub it in. I can't help being one of those unlucky beggars who's got so much, through no fault of his own, that he doesn't want anything else. Don't heave bricks at me when I wake up with a mild desire for something I don't need. Encourage me. Help me to work up an interest in an expensive toy. Tempt me into getting rid of some of my superfluous cash. It helps some other feller, y'know, and anyway the only thing I've never done is to desire a Rolls Royce, and I dreamt about it all night. Will you come and let me see if I can break your neck?"

"All right! A good way of getting it in shape for to-morrow. You'll drive out to Greenwich, won't you?"

Franklin looked up quickly from the plate which had been occupying his close attention. "Greenwich? Why Greenwich?"

Fraser grinned again. He seemed to find a lot of grim amusement in Franklin. "You read me a telegram that you sent off from the yacht accepting Mrs. Vanderdyke's invitation for the Pastoral house-party."

"Oh, my God, yes!"

"But perhaps you'll have to undergo a slight operation or sit by the bedside of a sick relative, or something."

"No; I shall go. I promised Ida Larpent I'd meet her there."

"Oh!" said Fraser, dryly. "I see." He hoped to draw further details.

But Franklin let it go. There were so many far more vital things to talk about than women.

"By Jove!" said Fraser, going off at a tangent. "I envy you this house-party. You'll be able to talk to Beatrix."

"Well, that won't worry me much." Franklin had passed from sausages to Virginia ham and was still going strong.

"Maybe not. Your attention is occupied. It would worry me a whole lot, though. That girl has a strange effect on me. Always has, ever since I met her. That was before she left this country to be put to school in England. I only have to catch her eyes to begin to tremble at the knees. Ever had that queer sensation?"

"Twice," said Franklin, taking another cup of coffee.

"Who were they?"

"One was a tiger in the Indian bush, and the other a crazy Chinaman running amuck in San Francisco. They both made my knees waggle."

Fraser lit a cigarette, inhaled a mouthful of smoke and let it dribble through his nostrils. The first cigarette is worth going through breakfast to achieve. "Well," he said, without any of the self-consciousness that generally goes with the pulling down of the fourth wall, "I don't mind telling you, Pel, old man, but I'd give ten years of my life to marry Beatrix Vanderdyke."

"An expensive hobby," said Franklin.

"Yes, quite. But I knew her when she was a little

bit of a slip of a thing, before she realized what it meant to bear that dollar-weighted name. She was the sweetest kid I ever saw. She might have been left behind by the fairies. I watched the gradual change take place in her and the disastrous effect of governesses who licked the blacking off her boots and the army of servants who treated her as though she were the First National Bank come to life. I was one of the people, almost unnoticed, who stood on the pier and watched her sail for England with her mother and father and their retinue. Since her return and during the time that she was a débutante and every newspaper in the country knelt at her feet I have met her perhaps a dozen times — the opera, the horse show, the races, and so on. She has given me two fingers and half a smile. She has been utterly and absolutely spoiled. She doesn't seem to be even distantly related to the little girl with the fairy face with whom I used to play in the country. And that's why I should like to marry her, and would make a huge sacrifice to do it. You may laugh and call me all sorts of a fool, but I should like to make it my business to chip off the outer layer of artificiality and affectation which has been plastered all over by her training and atmosphere. I would willingly die in hefty middle-age in order to bring back into that girl's eyes once more the look that she used to have as a child, so help me God!"

With extreme surprise Franklin watched his usually unemotional friend get up and walk over to the window. His voice had shaken with deep feeling and

there was a sincerity so profound in the sudden disclosure of his soul that it put him outside the region of chaff. And so Franklin left him alone and swallowed the badinage which he had intended to throw at him. "Ye gods!" he thought. "I wonder if I shall ever meet a woman who will make me think such things as that, or go the eighth of an inch out of my way. I rather wish I could." He possessed enough humor and imagination to know that he was not unlike the girl under discussion; that he, like her, had been born in surroundings that were peculiarly artificial and altogether unlike those of the average man; that the enormous wealth to which he had succeeded made any sort of effort unnecessary, and left him without the urgent incentive for the good and glorious grapple for a place in the sun, which made most of his countrymen prove themselves and their worth.

He led the way into the studio where all that his life could show hung on the walls. Each head and each stuffed fish and every one of the skins had its interest, but as he looked round the huge room he told himself that they all came to very little and proved that he was a fine example of a man who had done nothing but play games. His toys were very empty and meaningless. A new and curious impatience with himself came over him. He was rather annoyed with Fraser for having shown him the quivering nerve of his hitherto hidden sincerity. "My God!" he thought. "I wonder when I shall begin to live!"

IV

It was twelve o'clock before Beatrix left the house with Mrs. Lester Keene and walked down to Fifty-seventh Street. To the relief of the gasping city, a phalanx of dark clouds had put out the sun. A storm which had burst with great violence over Westchester County was bearing slowly down. The air was heavy and windless, and the gasoline vapor from all motor traffic hung like an oily veil everywhere. The seats in the Park were filled with listless people. Men sat on the tops of busses with their coats off. The very trees looked tired and sapless.

"I wonder how soon we shall get the storm," said Beatrix.

Mrs. Keene fanned herself with an envelope. "The sooner the better. This heat is unbearable. Don't you think, dear, that you can leave town to-night? I'm longing to get back to the country."

Beatrix crossed the street. The only cool figure in the city was that of the rather too plump young woman who stood naked and unashamed over the fountain in the geometrical open space in front of the Plaza. "Oh, yes, I could, of course," she said, "but if you can put up with another night here, I won't. I'm not going to allow mother and father and Aunt Honoria to imagine that I'm awed by them — that would be weak. For the sake of the whole of the younger

generation I must maintain my attitude of complete independence." She glanced at the line of automobiles which were drawn up outside the famous shop in Fifty-seventh Street. "The Dames from Virginia seem to be keeping Raoul fairly busy. I rather hope that Tubby will be here to-day. She is such fun."

"Tubby" was the nickname which had been given to the astute woman who had started her dressmaking business in London and extended it to New York,— a woman who had married an Italian Count and who, with consummate art and the assistance of an imaginative press agent, ran herself as though she were an actor-manager and her shops as though they were theatres. By charging enormous prices and calling her frocks by poetical names she had bluffed the gullible public into believing that she was the last word — the very acme of fashion. Like most charlatans who succeed, she had grown to believe that she was what she said she was,— an artist who had been sent into the world not for the purpose of making money or any such vulgar and banal proceeding, but in order to design coverings for female forms which would leave as much of them as possible open to the gaze without causing the arrest of the wearer.

At the first sight of Beatrix there was a stir and a rustle among a collection of tall, willowy and rather insolent young women who were lolling about, and a whisper of "Miss Vanderdyke" was passed from one to the other. Tubby's deputy wabbled forward,— herself a lady of very generous proportions who shone, like a fat seal, in very shiny satin. "Oh, good morn-

ing, Miss Vanderdyke!" she said, deferentially. "Your costume is well advanced. Will you be good enough to step upstairs?"

Beatrix nodded. "Is Tubby here to-day?" she asked.

The seal-like lady looked as though she had received a prod from a sharp fork. "No," she said, "the Countess is feeling the strain of an even more than usually busy season. She is undergoing a rest cure. As you know, she's very high-strung."

"I'm sorry," said Beatrix.

Followed by Mrs. Keene, she went up a wide staircase painted white and arrived at what Tubby invariably called the "atelier," on the first floor. Here the Southerners, to whom Beatrix had referred, were undergoing the apparently exciting process of being tried on. There were perhaps a dozen women in the large airy room, and each one was surrounded by fitters sticking pins into various parts of them and paying no sort of attention to the suggestions or the protests of their victims.

A very special girl came forward with the Shakesperian costume that was being carried out, or "created," as Tubby would say, for Beatrix. It was a sort of Titania costume, white, loose and airy, with a shimmer here and there of silver, which could very easily have been made at home for a mere nothing. The special girl, with a quiet "If you will allow me," unhooked Beatrix's frock, murmuring one or two well-turned compliments as to her figure, and helped her into the robe that was to cause a sensation in the Queen

Anne gardens of the Vanderdyke country house.

Utterly unconscious of the other women in the room, Beatrix swept up to the astonished Mrs. Keene, and in a high clear voice, cried out: "Set your heart at rest; the fairy land buys not the child of me. His mother was a votaress of my order; and in the spiced Indian air, by night, full often hath she gossip'd by my side; and sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands, marking the embarked traders on the flood; when we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive and grow big-bellied with the wanton wind ——"

"Oh, my dear!" cried Mrs. Keene. "Do you remember that there are people present. That may be Shakespeare, but really his choice of words is very shocking."

Beatrix burst out laughing. "You should have waited for the next few lines, Brownie. Even *I* am going to blush when I spout them under the trees. Yes," she said to the girl, "I think this costume will do quite well. Don't forget to let me have a wand. The wreath I'll make myself of real flowers. Shall I have to come again?"

"No, Miss Vanderdyke, there's nothing to do now except the silver belt, and we needn't trouble you as to that."

"Well," said Beatrix, "I shall leave town to-morrow directly after lunch. Be sure you send the dress round to my house in good time. Thank you. Good morning."

Mrs. Keene gave a little cry. "Oh, you've forgotten to put on your frock, dear," she said.

"Have I? It's so hot it didn't seem necessary."

Beatrix came back. She had already arrived halfway towards the staircase in what was a most bewitching undress. She never could resist the temptation of putting Mrs. Keene on tenter-hooks. She stepped into her frock and submitted to being hooked up. She noticed that the girl who had tried her on looked very pale and tired. "Aren't you going away?" she asked.

A rather wan smile passed over the girl's pretty face. "No, Miss Vanderdyke, not this year."

"What, you aren't going to take any holiday at all?"

The girl shook her head. "My mother has been very ill, and doctor's bills ——"

"I'm so sorry," said Beatrix. "What's your name?"

"Mary Nicholson."

Beatrix went over to Mrs. Keene, who was examining a Paris model between the windows. She opened a bag which hung on the elderly lady's arm and took out a cheque-book. Armed with this she made her way over to a desk, sat down and wrote a cheque for five hundred dollars, payable to the girl whom she had seen constantly on duty since the previous October. This she slipped into an envelope and wrote on it, "Please take a little holiday to oblige me?" And having returned the cheque-book to the ample bag in which Mrs. Keene kept enough necessities to provide against shipwreck or other likely accidents, slipped the envelope into the girl's hand and said

"Good-bye. Let me know about your mother."

On the way down stairs the first crash of thunder broke over the city and heavy rain beat against the window. "We shall have to drive home," said Beatrix. "Will you ask them to call up a taxi?"

Her ladyship's deputy came forward. "I hope you found the costume to your liking, Miss Vanderdyke."

"Oh, yes," said Beatrix. "It'll do very well. I shall have to be very careful how I'm photographed, because if I stand against the light there'll be very little left to the imagination."

"This's an artistic age," replied Madame, with a sly smile.

Beatrix joined her companion under the shop's awning, from the corners of which the rain came down in long streams. The uniformed man, with "Raoul" on his hat, was making frantic endeavors to obtain a cab, but without success. The line of taxis outside the Great Northern Hotel had been taken.

"I'm afraid we shall have to wait," said Mrs. Keene.

"I don't mind the rain," said Beatrix. "Let's walk."

"I'd so much rather not, dear," said Mrs. Keene. "Getting wet always brings on my rheumatism, and will absolutely spoil my dress. Have patience for at least five minutes."

"D'you think I can?" asked Beatrix. "Five minutes is a long time."

Two men drove by in a new and beautiful limousine. The one who was not driving turned round and saw the two ladies standing under the awning. The car slowed down, turned and came smoothly up to Raoul's.

Fraser jumped out and stood bare-headed in front of Beatrix.

"How d'you do?" he said. "Pretty bad storm this. Can we drive you anywhere?"

"Oh, hello!" said Beatrix. "I thought it must be you. Yes, it'll be awfully kind of you to give us a lift. Taxis seem to be at a premium. Mrs. Lester Keene — Mr. Malcolm Fraser."

"How d'you do," said Mrs. Keene, the thought of rheumatism and a spoiled dress at the back of her cordiality. "It is very kind of you to come to our rescue."

Fraser beamed at Beatrix. His whole whimsical, sincere and honest personality paid deference to her loveliness. "You owe me nothing," he said. "I wish you did. I only happened to see you standing here. It's Franklin's car."

Beatrix smiled back at him. He still seemed to her to be the self-constituted brother — the round-faced serious boy who used to look after her sled and carry her skates and make himself generally and generously useful. "You have a gift for happening to see people when they need you, Malcolm," she said, and he was amply rewarded.

Franklin got out of the car and came to meet Beatrix as she led the way under the rain-splashed awning.

"How are we to thank you, Mr. Franklin?" Beatrix held out a most gracious hand. "You come just at the moment when I was going to plough through all this wet."

"You'd have been soaked to the skin in about a

minute," he said. "It's tropical." He held open the door of the limousine.

He showed a touch of reproof at her impatience which Beatrix was quick to catch. She remembered that invariably when she had met him there had been a suggestion of antagonism in his manner. For some reason she was not, she knew, altogether to his liking. It amused her. "I'll ride in front, if I may," she said, with the mischievous intention of seeing whether he would try to coerce her as he had done once before, "but I'll wait until you get in."

He, too, remembered the incident at a dance the year before when he had told her that she was sitting in a dangerous draught and asked her to move, and she had declined. He stood up to her. This spoiled, wilful girl needed a master. He felt an impish desire to prevent her from getting her own way. "I'd rather you rode inside," he replied. "Then there'll be no chance of your getting wet."

"Please let me ride in front," said Beatrix, and a bewitching smile and a little upward look of appeal settled the matter.

Franklin returned to his seat and, when Beatrix was in, made a long arm over her knees and shut the door with a bang. "What a girl!" he said to himself. "As pretty as paint; but, ye gods, how she needs the spurs."

As sick as a dog that Beatrix was not with him, Fraser handed Mrs. Keene in and yelled, through another crash of thunder: "Go ahead, Pel!"

"Where may I drive you?"

"Anywhere you like," said Beatrix, airily. "I've nothing to do."

The rain was running in streams along the gutters and the day had gone as dark as though it were late evening. The sidewalks were deserted and people who had been caught were huddling under doorways. A clean, fresh smell had taken the place of stale gasoline.

Franklin was nonplussed. He looked round and saw the girl's delicately-cut profile with its short nose blunted at the tip, its rather full, red lips and round chin. She was sitting with her shoulders back, her head held high, and an air of supreme unconcern. In no part of the world, under any sort of sky, under any kind of condition had he seen a girl so delightful to the eye and so irritating to the temper. He and Fraser were on their way home and two men were going to lunch with them. It didn't matter to her whether he were on his way to a wedding or a funeral. *She* had nothing to do.

He sent the car forward, turned it into Fifth Avenue and drove up to the Vanderdyke house. Its great doors were boarded up and no footman was ready to spring out with a huge umbrella.

"I'm quite happy," said Beatrix. "May I sit here until this downpour relaxes a little? It's a very nice car."

Franklin sent out a big laugh. This young woman took the biscuit. It might go on pouring for an hour. But *she* was quite happy, *she* had nothing to do and therefore he must cry a halt to life and its obligations

and engagements and be content, and even thankful, to sit at her side until such time as it pleased her and the storm to make a move.

"Please sit here as long as you like," he said. "Fraser and I have some men coming to lunch at one o'clock. Will you excuse me if we get out and leave you?"

"Of course," said Beatrix, without allowing him to see the remotest inkling of the fact that she knew how much he would love to treat her as though she were an unbroken colt. "Before you have to go, tell me about to-morrow. You'll drive, I suppose? I saw your name on mother's list for the Pastoral house-party, and she told me that you had agreed to play a small part."

"Yes, I shall drive," said Franklin, running his eyes over her curiously, thinking how beautiful she was and how badly she stood in need of coming up against love or grief. "Fraser's an old friend of yours, it appears," he added, looking at his watch.

"Indeed, yes. But mother doesn't know my old friends."

"I see." He knew that this implied question as to why Fraser was not included in the house-party was answered. This girl might have served as First Secretary to an Ambassador, or have been a leader of society for twenty years.

Then he opened the door of the car and stood bareheaded in the downpour. "I hope you won't be obliged to sit here long," he said. "I'll send a man along to look after the car. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Beatrix, with a perfectly straight face, but laughing at him with her eyes. "Thank you so much for rescuing and looking after two lone females."

"Come on, Malcolm," said Franklin, shortly.

And Fraser, wondering what sort of madness had attacked his friend, murmured things to the equally amazed elderly lady, bowed to the calm, slight, alluring figure in the front of the car and went.

Beatrix watched them duck their heads against the slanting rain which bounced up from the pavement and hurry away. "I like him for that," she thought. "I didn't think he would do it." Then she picked up the speaking tube and called out: "Brownie, so that you sha'n't get rheumatism and spoil your dress we're going to enjoy this shelter until the rain stops. And, by the way, I think the house-party's going to be fairly interesting after all."

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V

The Vanderdyke house at Greenwich was built upon a point which jutted out into the Sound. It was not merely a house, it was an edifice,— a great florid, stiff, stone building which might easily have been a town hall, a public library, a museum, a lunatic asylum or a hospital. It had a peculiar green roof and many turrets, and it formed a landmark which could be seen for miles from all parts of the country.

A long drive through beautifully wooded gardens ablaze with lilac and rhododendron, and wide lawns bespattered with uncountable groups of erect tulips did much to soften the angular pomposity of the barrack which had been built by Beatrix's grandfather. Stone pergolas covered with climbing roses on the point of bursting into bloom shot out from the house and hid the ample stables and garages. An inspiring and invigorating view of the Sound caught the eye through the trees. There had been a belated spring, after a long and cantankerous winter, but now tree and shrub vied with one another and the first fresh green of them all was almost dazzling. The chestnuts, especially, were prodigal with bloom and looked like great Christmas trees thickly covered with bunches of white candles, and everywhere birds sang and went merrily about the little business of their lives.

The car in which Beatrix and Mrs. Lester Keene drove up was followed closely by Franklin's new Rolls Royce, in the body of which all his baggage was stacked. Franklin, who had been driving, sprang out and opened the door of the other car. "I've been dogging your heels," he said, "and incidentally getting all your dust. How d'you do?"

"Don't blame me for the dust," said Beatrix. "Why didn't you overtake us and finish the journey in bright conversation with the two grateful and admiring females to whom you behaved like a knight errant yesterday? You and I always seem to have a great deal to talk about, don't we?"

Franklin knew that she was pulling his leg. Hitherto, during their occasional meetings, their conversation had been more or less monosyllabic. He felt tempted to say that he preferred driving to talking to women, but held his peace. There would perhaps be plenty of opportunities of getting his own back.

They passed a double line of men-servants and went into the large hall together. Mrs. Keene gave one quick glance round and, imitating a rabbit which hears the approach of enemy, scuttled across to the elaborate staircase and hurried away. Mrs. Vanderdyke,— a very finished, rather too tall, insistently slight woman who never raised her voice and seldom laughed and seemed to be continually watching herself in a mental looking-glass,— met them. Her dark hair was dressed as carefully as a salad. Her perfectly correct and well-balanced face was as well painted as the cover of a magazine, and without any undue compres-

sion she wore a white frock which might have been made for a girl of twenty-four. She gave her left hand to Beatrix and placed a mere suggestion of a kiss on her left ear. "So you've come," she said. Her right hand she gave to Franklin, to whom she added, "You are very welcome."

"Thanks," said Franklin. "I'm delighted to be here."

And then Miss Honoria Vanderdyke sailed forward. With her white hair, thin, thoroughbred face, rather frail, tall figure and old-fashioned dress she might have stepped out of one of Jane Austen's books. Without any attempt to act the part, she looked every inch the great lady and stood frankly and proudly for all that was best of the generation which is scoffingly referred to as mid-Victorian. She, too, gave Beatrix a perfunctory greeting and the merest peck on the cheek, and turned with the utmost graciousness to Franklin. "I'm very glad to see you," she said. "Your father and I were old friends. I hope that we may know each other better."

Franklin bowed over her hand. In all his travels he had rarely seen a woman who so well lived up to his ideas of dignity and beauty grown old gracefully. "Thank you very much," he said. "You're very kind."

Then Mr. Vanderdyke made his appearance — the mere husk of a man — uneager, hypochondriacal, melancholy-looking, grey-headed, with a white moustache every hair of which seemed to be in a state of utter depression. Completely ignoring his daughter,

he gave a limp hand to Franklin. "I'm glad to see you," he said, without any warmth, and then backed away and began to look at Beatrix with an expression of such pained surprise that she almost burst out laughing.

Her whole reception by the family proved to her that she was now regarded by them as the prodigal daughter. There was obviously going to be a scene presently. Well, she didn't care. She could hold her own against all of them. She almost wished that there was enough in her relations with Sutherland York to warrant their disturbed feelings. It was like eating an egg without salt to proceed into a row without a cause.

"I dare say that you'd like to go up to your room at once," said Mrs. Vanderdyke.

Franklin bowed, smiled and followed the footman upstairs.

Through the French windows Beatrix caught sight of a number of people having tea on one of the terraces. She made no effort to join them, but sat on the edge of a long, narrow table with bulbous legs and selected a magazine. Beneath her short frock rather more than two delicate ankles showed themselves. She saw no reason why they shouldn't, knowing that they were worth infinite admiration. Her father irritably acknowledged that he had never seen her so lovely, so cool, so self-possessed or more utterly desirable in her first sweet flush of beauty and youth. She seemed to say: "Come on, all of you, and get it over, and then let there be peace."

Her challenge was eagerly accepted by her mother, who looked round to see that the hall was deserted of guests and servants, and closed down upon Beatrix with more anger in her eyes than the girl had ever before seen in them.

"I don't quite know what's to be done with you," she said.

"I thought it was agreed that I shall play 'Titania,'" replied Beatrix, glancing up with an air of mild surprise. "I've brought a charming costume with me."

Aunt Honoria joined in. "In my opinion the moment is ill-chosen for this unpleasant business. It might better have been reserved until our guests are changing for dinner. However, there's every excuse for your mother's impatience, Beatrix, and as the matter is one about which we all feel very deeply it will be well for you to take it seriously."

Beatrix gave a little bow.

"In the history of the family," said Mr. Vanderdyke, with more feeling than anyone had ever seen him display, "never before has one of its women been connected with a scandal."

Beatrix laid down the magazine. "Somebody said that scandal comes from the mouth of Ananias." She gave them all the epigram for what it was worth.

Her mother spoke again. "Aunt Honoria has had a letter from a friend of hers telling her that you've been seen going into the apartment of a portrait painter, called Sutherland York, late at night."

"And coming out," added her father.

"I should naturally come out," said Beatrix, smiling at him as though he had said an unintentionally comic thing.

"It has been reported to me," said Aunt Honoria, "that as often as once a week during the winter and spring you've visited this man alone at night. You don't deny that?"

"Oh, no."

"Good God!" said Mr. Vanderdyke.

"And you don't deny that you were there last night?"

"The night before last," said Beatrix quietly.

Mrs. Vanderdyke almost raised her voice. "What you could see in a flamboyant creature of that type——"

"That isn't the point," said Aunt Honoria. "We are not concerned as to whether Beatrix has developed vulgar tastes and has found this painter attractive. We are concerned with the fact that for some utterly inadequate and inexcusable reason, she has surrounded our name with a net-work of vulgar gossip which, inevitably, will find its way into the scurrilous paragraphs of the carrion press."

"For the first time in history!" Mr. Vanderdyke almost wailed.

"We're very jealous of our good name," continued Aunt Honoria. "We've endeavored to set an example to society. It's inconceivable to us that it should have been left to you, old enough as you are to appreciate the truth of things, to put a slur upon us and with an obvious disregard for our reputation become

the subject of smoke-room gossip. I don't think that even *you* could make me believe that you've played the fool with this picturesque person, who, I hear, makes professional love to the silly wives of men with more money than sense. I can see that you've been merely indulging your latent sense of adventure or trying to persuade yourself that you've been playing the heroine's part in a romance."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Vanderdyke.

Beatrix gave her a quick look. The implication of those two words hit her hard. But she said nothing, and gave the white-haired lady another little bow.

"A portrait-painting charlatan!" said Mr. Vanderdyke.

Aunt Honoria paid very little attention to these interruptions. "That's my firm belief. Please God, I'm justified. You were asked to return last night, so that this most unfortunate business might be gone into quietly. You exercised the right of modern youth to tell us that we might go to the devil. Let me assure you, my dear Beatrix, now that you've chosen to come, that we do not intend to be relegated to that person, even to oblige you. On the contrary, the point that has been gone into during your absence is the place to which *we* are going to relegate *you*."

"I don't quite understand," said Beatrix.

Her mother put in "probably not," to the peculiar discussion which was being conducted, on the face of it, as though its subject were politics,—without outward heat, angry gesture or raised voices, but with an

intensity of feeling that made the air vibrate all round these four ultra-civilized people.

"And I am very far from well," said Mr. Vanderdyke, with curious irrelevance.

Beatrix very nearly laughed. "Dear old Daddy," she said to herself, "how funny he can be."

"We came to a decision this morning," said Aunt Honoria, "in which I think you'll be interested. Your attitude over the telephone on top of my very inconvenient visit to New York the night before last, — of which, naturally, your companion told you,— was a pretty conclusive proof that you're quite callous of what has been and will be said about you and that you show no inclination to accept our demands, requests or pleadings to tone down your supreme individualism to a normal level and give up playing the ostrich in town. In short, my dear Beatrix, we realize that unless we assert our authority this once and make it impossible for you to get us all into a deeper scandal, you'll continue to 'carry on,'— I quote the expression from the language of the servants' hall,— either with York or some other equally impossible member of the long-haired brigade."

"I'm old enough to take care of myself, I think," said Beatrix.

"We don't," said her mother.

"Nor of *us* and the family reputation," added Aunt Honoria, "which, as I've said already, is the point. You'll go through with the pastoral,— that'll avoid comment,— then you'll see a doctor and it'll be given out that your constitution needs an entire change of

air and scene. About a week after the present house-party has broken up you'll join me on a visit to my cottage in Maine, and there you'll spend a quiet, thoughtful year learning how to live from nature, with my devoted assistance."

Mrs. Vanderdyke punctuated this sentence of banishment with an inaudible comment.

A sort of groan came from Mr. Vanderdyke. He adored his only child.

With a supreme effort of will, Beatrix controlled an almost overwhelming desire to scream at what was, to her way of thinking, a form of punishment quite barbarian in its severity. She remained, instead, in an attitude of polite patience, determining to die rather than to show how awful the very thought of such an excommunication was to her, who was only really happy when in the whirl of town life. Her inherent honesty made her confess to herself that, little as she realized it at the time,— never having stopped in her impetuous desire to go her own way and carry out her own wishes,— she had laid herself open to every charge brought against her. She owned that her indiscretion had been colossal, and instantly dismissed all idea of giving her family a picture of the utter harmlessness of her relations with York. She disliked and regretted having brought the family name into the mouth of gossipers as much as the three people who stood over her and knew perfectly well that they fully intended to carry the punishment out to its bitter end. But,— and here her fertile mind began to work,— was there a single living person so foolish as to believe that she

was made of the feeble stuff that knuckled down to the loss of one whole exciting season in town for the lack of a brain wave? Had she ever yet, either in the nursery or in school, so wanted in courage or in wit as not to have been able to carry out a quick and effective counterstroke against authority? Not she!

She looked up, avoided the eyes of her father, mother and aunt, and saw Pelham Franklin in the gallery that ran round the hall. He was standing with his hands in his pockets, looking at a portrait of the Vanderdyke who had come over from Holland to lay the foundations of a great fortune. A sudden impish and daring idea took possession of her. She would use this man, as she had hitherto used any other likely person, to triumph over her present quandary, and trust to her invariable good luck to see her through. It was the legitimate outcome of her autocratic upbringing, the fact that she had had it instilled into her from babyhood that she had only to raise her finger to obtain her own way. Acting, as usual, on impulse and not stopping to give a second's thought to the complications that might be caused by it, she turned back to the three people who stood waiting for her to speak with a very sweet smile, and the glorious knowledge that she could turn the tables upon them and become top-dog again. She was going to fight for that season in town with all her strength, never mind who paid for her success.

"I'm very sorry about all this," she said, "and I want you to believe that I had no intention of inspiring unpleasant remarks or putting you to all this pain.

But you'll be glad to hear that this story about my visits to Sutherland York is only half true,— like most stories of the kind. It hasn't occurred to you, has it, that more than one man may live in York's apartment house and that I may have been going to see him?" She saw, with a quicker action of her heart, that Franklin was coming downstairs.

"It makes no difference whether the man you went to see was York or another," said Aunt Honoria, in her most incisive way. "The fact remains that everyone is talking about your visits to some man, alone at night."

Franklin caught the words, gave a quick, sympathetic glance at Beatrix, whom he rather pitied,— he detested family rows,— and drew up to examine another picture, with well-simulated interest.

Beatrix began to enjoy herself. A wave of exhilaration swept over her. She had a surprise in store for her family that would transfer her from the position of a prodigal daughter to that of a Joan of Arc, a Grace Darling, a Florence Nightingale. Never mind who paid!

She raised her voice so that Franklin should hear her. "I would willingly and without any argument be sent to the backwoods for a year if I'd made a fool of myself with a man like Sutherland York. He was never anything more to me than a poseur and a freak, and as such he amused me. But what will you and all these people with nasty minds say if I tell you that I had every right to pay midnight visits to the man who lived in the studio opposite to York's, and if there is

anything attaching to our name it is not scandal, but romance?"

Franklin wheeled round. What on earth was the girl trying to suggest to save her skin?

An amazing change came over the three accusers. They all knew that Franklin's rooms were in the same building as York's,— Franklin, the man whom they would rather see married into their family than anyone alive.

"W-what d'you mean?" cried Mr. Vanderdyke, stammering in his eagerness.

Mrs. Vanderdyke lost her perfect reserve for once and grasped her daughter's arm. "Tell us! Tell us!" she cried.

Over Aunt Honoria's face the beginning of a new understanding came. "What is this right, Beatrix?" she asked. "What is it?"

Beatrix came to the jump, rose to it and cleared it at a bound, with every drop of blood in her lovely body tingling with excitement and a glorious sense of being alive, being beautiful, being able to carry everything before her. She was leaping from one scrape to another, but in this one she was dealing with a sportsman who would help her somehow.

"The right," she said, throwing up her head, "of a girl who goes to see the man to whom she has been secretly married."

She rose, and with exquisite shyness and her fair skin touched with the color that nature paints upon the petals of apple blossoms, went across to Franklin and ran her hand through his arm.

"Play up," she whispered. "Oh, please play up."

"The little devil," thought Franklin. "Take the biscuit? Ye gods, she collars the whole blessed cake!"

What could he do, under such extraordinary circumstances and with such a sweet appeal, but smile and pat her hand and stand there, in front of the delighted and astonished family, with just that suggestion of charming sheepishness that all happy men wear when discovered in the tangle of a romantic love story!

VI

In her relief at being able to put a stop to the ugly story which coupled the names of Beatrix Vanderdyke and Sutherland York, Aunt Honoria,— who invariably took the lead in all matters relating to her family,— not only at once gave out to the house-party the news of the romantic marriage of her niece and Pelham Franklin, but, with her characteristic thoroughness, called up the editor of the New York *Times* and gave it to him for immediate publication. In her mind's eye she saw the front page of the next day's issue setting forth under big headlines, with photographs of the happy couple, an elaborate account of the wealth and importance of the families of Vanderdyke and Franklin. This would be taken up and spun out by all the other papers in the country, and then, she rejoiced to know, would be killed the insidious scandal with which the family name had been connected to the horror and pain of all who bore it.

Neither she, nor any of the members of the house party, stopped to ask a single question. They had swallowed the story of Beatrix and Sutherland York whole. They now swallowed the news of the secret marriage with the same appetite. It is the human way. The details mattered nothing. The motive which led to so unusual a proceeding as a secret marriage, the

place and date of the ceremony, mattered nothing. They had all believed without corroboration that Beatrix had fallen a victim to the picturesque attractions of the much-advertised portrait painter. In the same way they accepted the new and much more exciting fact and hastened to congratulate their hostess and the two young people concerned.

Beatrix found herself, as she knew that she would, the heroine of the family. Her mother smiled upon her during the remainder of the day and frequently placed her usually unemotional hand on her daughter's shoulder and said: "My dear, dear child," or "dear Beatrix."

Her father,— that rather pathetic figure, a man who had never done a stroke of work since his birth — whose immense wealth had utterly deprived him of the initiative to do things, conquer things or achieve things, and who found himself in late middle-age without having discovered the master-secret of life — how to live, — came out of his almost settled melancholia for the time being and behaved at dinner like any ordinary healthy, normal man, laughing frequently and cracking little jokes with his guests. Whenever he caught his daughter's eyes he gave her the most tender and appreciative smile, and came so far out of his shell as to raise his glass to Franklin, who responded with a very queer smile.

As for Aunt Honoria,— a past-mistress in the art of graciousness,— so proud and happy was she that her pet ambition of a union between her family and Franklin's had been fulfilled, that she readily forgave the un-

conventional behavior of the two young people, the lack of a wonderful wedding and a great society function, and beamed upon them both. She caught Beatrix as she was about to dash upstairs to change for dinner and folded her arms about the girl, whose eyes danced with the spirit of mischief and the sheer fun of it all. "My darling," she said, "you've made me very happy. No wonder you came home to-day defiant and with a high head. You held a royal flush. You've won the love of a man, my dear. Honor and respect it, and may God bless you!"

Upstairs in her room, whose windows gave a view of the Sound that was indescribably charming, Beatrix had a brief, almost breathless talk with Mrs. Lester Keene, to whom the story of the secret marriage had come as a frightful shock. This amiable, weak woman, hide-bound in her ideas of right and wrong, met her with nerves unstrung, and incoherent in her terror of being implicated in what she knew to be a lie.

But Beatrix waved her stammering reproaches aside. "Brownie," she cried, at the top of her form, "whatever happens you're safe, so don't worry. I've jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire, but I'm an excellent jumper and I believe in luck. I dare not think where the next spring will land me, so I'm not going to think. Sufficient unto the day, you know, and Franklin is a sportsman. All I know is that at this moment I'm the little pet of all the world; that I had the unspeakable delight of turning the tables on my people and that I feel as beautiful as I look,— and that's saying a good

deal. Now run away and tell Helene to come and dress me as befits a young wife still on her honeymoon." She gave the elderly, disturbed lady a kiss on both her cheeks, shooed her out of the room and broke into song.

Only once during dinner did she permit herself to meet Franklin's eyes and then, for the first time since she had sprung her suddenly conceived surprise upon her irate family, she received a momentary shock which ran through her body like that of electricity, leaving her tingling and frightened. But with her abounding capacity for recovery and her all-conquering belief in herself and her gift for getting out of scrapes she shook the feeling off and went through the rest of the evening in the highest spirits. No one had ever seen her looking so brilliantly or so exquisitely beautiful. Her eyes shone like stars, her dimples came and went and came again. She was the life of the house, moving from group to group like a young Helen — a wood nymph — the very spirit of joy and laughter. Not for the ninety-ninth part of a second did she permit herself to pull up and wonder what she had done; where her impetuous, hare-brained, autocratic desire for self-preservation might lead. Never for an instant, or the fraction of an instant, did she give a thought to the appalling difficult position into which her spur-of-the-moment scheme had placed Franklin. What she had done she had done, and there, for the time being, was the end of it. Somehow or other everything would come right, as it always did. Why else was she who she was? Why else had she

been led to believe that the earth, the sun and the moon were hers. It was all the natural correlation of her training since she had been brought into the world.

Franklin allowed Beatrix to avoid a talk with him until many of the guests had gone to bed. Between the moment when she had slipped her arm through his and made that urgent and almost childlike appeal which had carried him off his feet and left him without caution and sanity, and the one when he stalked across the pompous hall to her side and drew her into an alcove, he had done some peculiar thinking. He was a straight-going, honest fellow, who, like Beatrix, had gone through life having his own way. No living soul had ever before coerced him from the path that he had chosen. He was in no sense of the word a lady's man, and he had no idea of marrying and settling down until he had had enough of hunting and camping.

He had watched Beatrix closely. He had seen her reinstated into the family favor, taking the congratulations that were poured upon her by them and their friends with a charming dignity that took his breath away. He guessed, of course, that he had been "used" by Beatrix to save herself from punishment, because he had been obliged to overhear the last part of the family attack. But he expected from moment to moment that she would either permit him to deny the story of the secret marriage or do so herself. It was inconceivable to him that this lie was to be allowed to get them both deeper and deeper into a most deplorable tangle.

He was blazing with anger when at last he found her alone for a moment, and he made no attempt to hide it. "I want a word with you," he said shortly.

Beatrix tried to escape. "A little later," she said.

"No, now."

"I'm so sorry ——"

Franklin took her arm and led her into the quiet corner. "Sit down," he said.

There was something so new and refreshing in receiving orders, that Beatrix gave a little laugh and obeyed.

Franklin took a seat at her side. Their knees almost touched.

"You evidently take me for many kinds of a fool," he said.

"Not at all. May I trouble you for a cushion?" She bent slightly forward.

He placed one behind her back. "Whether you do or not, you've made me one,— the most colossal example of a damned idiot I've ever struck."

"Oh, please don't say that."

Franklin's eyes flicked. This girl could be flippant under such circumstances, could she? She could sit knee to knee with an angry man and remain as self-possessed and undisturbed as though she were resting between dances. Well, he would show her with whom she was dealing!

"Before your mother goes to bed," he said, "I'm going to put my foot through this yarn of yours and give the game away."

"Oh, no," replied Beatrix, "you'll certainly not do that."

"Why not?"

"Because, in addition to many other attributes, you happen to be a sportsman."

"But how long d'you imagine I'm to let this thing go on?"

"I haven't thought about it."

"Don't you see that you'd better begin to think pretty quickly?"

"No. Everything is going very well. Why disturb it?"

"But look at it from my point of view."

"To tell you the truth — I usually do tell the truth — to-day has been the exception that proves the rule,— I'm only able at present to look at it from *mine*."

"You realize that every hour makes the whole thing more impossible. It'll all be in the papers to-morrow."

"Isn't that exciting? I hope they'll be able to get an attractive photograph of you." Her heart was beating more and more quickly.

Franklin began to pull his short moustache. He hardly dared to trust to his choice of words. Yesterday he had told himself that this girl wanted the spurs. The thought came back to him as he sat racking his brain for some way out of the ghastly mess into which she had placed him. He saw that it was no earthly use to endeavor to talk sensibly to her and that she had made up her mind to hold him to the mad plan of escape into which she had dragged him.

Very good. He would show her that sportsmen were also very human men.

He raised his finger to a footman who was crossing the hall. "Have my things taken at once from my room to Mrs. Franklin's," he said, and, as the man bowed and went, put his hand under the elbow of the girl — who had turned as white as the gardenia at her waist — and added: "Let's go and say good night, darling. It's time for bed."

Beatrix turned upon him and wrenched her arm away. "You don't know what you're saying," she said.

"Oh, yes, I do. You've had your way to-day, I'm going to have mine to-night. Two can play your game, you know, and I'm going to show you how completely I can play it when I choose."

He took her hand in a grip of iron and led her to where Mrs. Vanderdyke was standing with Aunt Honoria. He looked the loving husband to the life. "Good night," he said. "Bee and I are rather tired after an exciting day."

Mrs. Vanderdyke gave him her hand, with her best smile. "And to-morrow we begin rehearsing and shall all be very busy. Good night."

"You look quite tired, my darling," said Aunt Honoria tenderly.

Beatrix received the kiss, tried to return the smile and to find even one word to say, but her heart was trembling, and her hand was held so tight that her fingers were crushed together. She heard other remarks as though they were spoken a long way off, felt

herself guided and controlled up the wide stairway as if she were walking in a dream, and found herself standing in the gallery.

"Which is your room!"

It was not a question. It was an order, sharp and short.

She pointed to the door, shaking like a frightened deer.

But when she stood inside her room, heard the door shut and locked, and saw Franklin with his white teeth gleaming under his moustache, her voice came back and she clasped her hands together in a very ecstasy of appeal.

"Let me off! Please, *please* let me off!"

Franklin shot out a laugh. "Not I. You've told everybody that you're my wife. Good. Live up to it."

He took the key out of the lock and put it in his pocket. Then he sat down and crossed one leg over the other. "How long will you be?" he asked.

This girl needed the spurs. He intended to use them.

VII

The sound of the key turning in the lock of her door had an instant and peculiar effect on Beatrix. It awoke in her the same primeval spirit which had carried Franklin into her bedroom on the wave of an infuriated impulse. It made her realize that the time for protest was over; that the moment when she could appeal (with any hope of success) to this man's sense of honor had passed. It was through her own action, and she knew it, that she had cracked the skin-deep veneer of civilization and rendered Franklin the mere savage which most men become under the influence of one or other of the passions.

Self-preservation was the instinct which was now uppermost in her mind. Alone, without help, with only her native wit to fall back on, she had to save herself from the almost unbelievable crisis that she had so lightly brought about. She grasped this fact quickly enough. One look at Franklin's face made it plain,— his blazing eyes, his set mouth, the squareness of his jaw.

It was characteristic of her, however, that while still under the first shock of his threat, his presence and the knowledge that he intended to carry out his purpose with all the cold-bloodedness and cruelty which comes from wounded vanity, the thought of the fight which faced her filled her with a sort of mental

delight. Here, if you like, was something new upon which she could bend her whole ingenuity — something which sent the monotony of her all-too-complete existence flying as before a cyclone. Her blood danced. Her spirits rose. Her eyes sparkled like those of the mountaineer who stands at the foot of a summit which has hitherto been unclimbed. She gave a little laugh as all these things flashed through her brain. She thrilled with the sense of adventure which had always been latent in her character and which was the cause of the amazing position in which she now found herself. Like a superb young animal brought to bay, she turned to defend herself, strung up to fight with every atom of her mental and physical strength for that which counted for more than life. That she regarded her antagonist with respect surprised her a little, but she was glad to make the discovery, because it made the fight all the more worth while. She recognized in this tall, wiry, dark-haired man, who looked in the very pink of condition and bore on his well-cut young face the tan of sun and wind, someone who had in him every single one of her own faults, whose training and environment were the same as her own, who had been made as impatient of control from the possession of excessive wealth as she was, and whose capacity for becoming untamed the very moment that the thin layer of culture which education gives falls in front of passionate resentment was similar in every way to that which had made her lie to her family.

It was with the feeling that she was leading lady

in an extremely daring society drama, that she took what she inwardly called the stage, as much mistress of herself as she had been in the rooms of the portrait painter. When she turned up the shaded lights on her dressing-table and over the fireplace she did so with the rhythmic movement and the sense of time which would have been hers had she rehearsed the scene and been now playing it to a crowded house on the first night of a metropolitan production. She seemed to hear the diminuendo of the orchestra and to feel that curious nervous exhilaration that comes from the knowledge of being focused by thousands of unseen eyes. It was surely an almost uncanny sense of humor which allowed her to stand outside herself in this way and watch all her movements as though they were those of another person. But,— she knew her part. She had the confidence of one who has completely memorized her lines. Her triumph would be complete when she succeeded in making Franklin put the key back into the lock of her door and remove himself from her presence.

As Franklin examined the room in which he never imagined that he would find himself and had no desire to be his determination to get even with the spoiled girl who had used him to get herself out of a family fracas grew stronger and stronger. It seemed to him that the room,— almost insolent in its evidences of wealth,— was symbolic. It was not, he saw, the room of a young, healthy, normal girl so much as of a woman of the world, a highly finished, highly fastidious *mondaine,* who had won the right to live in an

atmosphere of priceless tapestries, historic furniture, and a luxury that was quite Roman. He ran his eyes scornfully about and scoffed at the four-poster bed in which a French queen might have received, and probably did receive, the satellites and flatterers of her court; and saw through an open door not a mere bathroom, but a pool, marble-lined, with florid Byzantine decorations, discreetly lit. This thing angered him. It stood, he thought, as the reason for this girl's distorted idea of life — of her myopic point of view. It stood for many thousands of misplaced dollars which would, if sanely used, have provided much-needed beds for the accident wards of a hospital.

Not for the first time in his life, Franklin staggered at the sight of the abnormality of excessive wealth, and felt that he himself, like Beatrix, was nearer to lunacy than the ordinary human being because of the possession of it. The queer paradox of his having been made the instrument to bring this girl down from the false pedestal upon which she had stood ever since she was born, also struck him. He had never been much given to self-analysis or to the psychological examination of social conditions; but as he sat there in that large, lofty and extravagant, almost grotesquely furnished bedroom, more closely resembling that of one or other of the great courtezans than of an American girl in the first exquisite flush of youth, he came to the conclusion, with a savage sense of justice, that he would be doing something for civilization by bringing this millionaire's daughter face to face with the grim truth of things.

It was Beatrix who broke a silence which had only lasted a few minutes. "There are cigarettes at your elbow," she said. "Won't you smoke?"

Franklin looked up. The note of camaraderie in her voice surprised him. The last time he had heard her speak it was in a tone of agonized appeal. "No, thanks," he replied, "I've smoked enough."

"In training for one of your much-paragraphed athletic feats, perhaps," she said, a quizzical smile playing round her lips.

"I am," said Franklin. "Though I doubt whether this one will be as much advertised as the others." He looked steadily at her as he said this thing, caught the merest flick of her eyes and marked up to his credit the fact that she understood his meaning.

For several seconds these two eyed each other deliberately, like contestants in a prize ring. They measured each other up calculatingly without any attempt to hide the fact. It was with unwilling admiration that Franklin noted the girl's return to courage. He had to confess to himself that the fearless tilt of her chin and the superb grace of her attitude, which was as far from being self-conscious as though she were standing in the corner of a crowded drawing-room, pleased him. It was to be a fight, then. That was evident. The spirit of the huntsman rose in him as he realized this.

"Will you ring the bell for your maid?" he asked, making the first attack, "or shall I?"

She shook her head. "Pray don't trouble, there's plenty of time."

"I don't agree with you."

"Does that matter?"

"I think so."

"It's a free country."

She sat down in a chair which Louis XIV was popularly supposed to have used. The yellow light of a lamp on a silver pedestal fell upon her white shoulders.

Franklin got up. His blood raced through his veins. He didn't intend to stand any nonsense. He was going to show her precisely what it meant to be at the mercy of an impatient man. He went across to the door at the far end of the room and opened it. It disclosed a large and elaborate dressing-room lined with full-length mirrors, lighted like a theatre, and with a table covered with implements with tortoise-shell backs. There was another door beyond it. He turned the handle and threw it open. This was apparently a workroom, but much of it was in shadow. He saw a young, dark-haired woman kneeling on a chair with her shoulders rounded over a magazine spread out on a table. One black slipper had fallen off and lay on its side on the rug. A half-empty box of candies was near to her elbow. "Mrs. Franklin is ready for you," he said, and marched back again to his chair.

The maid, obviously French and with the characteristic Breton good-looks, followed him out, unable to disguise her amazement. She stood waiting for orders, with her hands clasped in front of her, in an attitude of rather serf-like humility,— a quiet, slight, black figure, touched with white at the collar and cuffs.

Beatrix crossed her legs and settled herself more comfortably into her chair. "You may go back, Helene," she said. "I will call you presently."

The girl bowed and slipped quietly away. Then Beatrix turned to Franklin, with a most tantalizing air of intimacy. "I'm not tired," she said, "and although you are very thoughtful,— more so than most husbands, which is perfectly charming,— I'm all for a little bright conversation. I was rather bored during dinner and afterwards. Don't you think you might amuse me? You seem to be a very amusing person."

Franklin showed his teeth in a silent laugh. "You think so?"

"Well, the indications point to it."

"You have a very vivid imagination, my child."

"A man doesn't call his wife a child until he's been married to her at least ten years, and then is quarreling over her extravagances."

"You may be right," said Franklin, shortly. "You'll oblige me by ceasing to play the fool. I'm not in a mood for it. I'll do the maid's job if you don't want that girl in here."

He got up again and stood over her, apparently the very acme of importunity.

Beatrix only showed her fright by a slight distention of her nostrils. She burst out laughing. "Among your other achievements, then, you know how to unhook a frock."

"I do," said Franklin. "Stand up, will you, please?"

"My dear Mr. Franklin," she said, drawling ever so little, "I forget your Christian name,— isn't there something just a trifle Oriental in your tone?"

"Very likely," said Franklin.

Beatrix sat back and put up a smiling face. "How old are you?" she asked.

"Does that matter?"

"Oh, yes. I think so. I'm trying to piece you together like one of those picture puzzles that children and septuagenarians play with. It seems to me that you must have spent a certain number of years among the black races. When you speak I seem to hear the distant hollow noise of the tomtom and the quaint semi-religious nasal voices of half-clothed savages who stand cowed before you. Am I right, sir?" She laughed again, disguising her trepidation with the expertness of a finished actress.

Franklin turned away and helped himself to a cigarette. "You said that I could smoke."

"Of course."

With almost impish glee, Beatrix told herself that she had won the first round.

When a man pauses to smoke it is usually a sign either that he is tired or that he needs something to keep his nerves under control. Franklin lit a cigarette for the latter purpose. The girl's assumption of utter coolness made him want to take her roughly by the shoulders and shake her as he would a naughty child. Her air of enjoyment and mischief made him all the more determined to see the thing through to the logical

end of it. He could see that she imagined she could mark time and possibly wear him out by the use of her wits, but that it did not occur to her how at any moment brute force might come into the argument. Ever since he had been old enough to go to school Franklin had resented being made a fool of, and any boy who had had the temerity to attempt to do so paid for it. He saw red on those occasions and could remember each one of them in every detail. He began to see red now. Not only had this young, wilful, uncontrolled child of wealth already made a most colossal fool of him, but there she was, calmer than he had ever seen her, treating him as though he were a green and callow youth, playing with him in order to break the monotony of a dull evening. His temper grew hotter.

"Listen!" he said. "It doesn't appear to be any use to treat you as an ordinary girl."

"Have you only just come to that conclusion?"

"I have broken in many thoroughbreds in my time, and unless you conform pretty quickly to the rules of the game that you have forced me to play, I shall have to use horse-breaking methods with you. Do you want me to put it plainer than that?"

"Before we go any further," said Beatrix, showing a most tantalizing flash of white teeth, "don't you think you ought to tell me what your Christian name is? I can't keep on saying 'My dear Mr. Franklin,' under these unconventional circumstances. It's so formal." She knew well enough, and he knew it.

"Get up!" said Franklin, thickly, keeping his hands

"Don't you think we make a charming picture of connubial felicity?" *Page 74.*

off her with the greatest difficulty. "Either go to your maid, or call her in. I'm through."

With a little bow, Beatrix rose. It was perfectly evident to her that Franklin was rapidly becoming dangerous and that at any moment he might let himself go. What could she do? According to her family, this man was her husband and, as such, had the right to be in her room. To scream would only make her look ridiculous, unless she intended to give herself away, and this she was not prepared to do under any circumstances. She might be able to fence with Franklin a little longer and, as a last resource, to pursue the ordinary tactics of a woman cornered and throw herself on his mercy, with tears. Humiliation, — that was the thing she hated most. And as she faced Franklin again, with these things running rapidly through her mind, she felt once more a renewed sense of admiration for his grim determination to punish. She owned to herself with perfect frankness that this odd and neurotic fight was between the two most spoiled children of her country. The sense of humor which was her saving grace gave her the power to see it in the light of something which was not without value and meaning in her life. If she had actually to fight like a wild-cat, she intended that the morning should find her as she was at that moment.

"Will you call Helene, then?" she said.

Franklin went across the room to the door of the maid's cubby-hole and rapped.

Beatrix, seized with a new idea, followed Franklin and with a touch of masterly audacity stood at his side

with her hand on his arm. "Don't you think we make a charming picture of connubial felicity?"

"My God!" said Franklin.

The maid came out, and as she did so, Beatrix made a dart into her room. She had suddenly remembered that she could escape through it into the main part of the house, and that if she could get away and find shelter in the arms of her fluttering companion she would be safe for that night at any rate.

But Franklin was too quick for her. He caught her by the arm just as she was about to win the first round.

"Oh, no, you don't," he said, and picked her up in his arms, carried her back into the bedroom and dumped her down on a divan as though she were a bundle of feathers.

Then he turned to the maid. "Just lock your door and bring me the key." And when in a moment it was timidly handed to him, he added, sharply: "Now get Mrs. Franklin ready for the night."

Beatrix stopped the girl as she padded softly over to the dressing-room. "Wait a minute, Helene," she said, and turned towards Franklin. "This is the hour when I drink a glass of hot milk, oh, my lord and master! Have I your gracious permission to continue the habit to-night? If so, will you permit my handmaiden to go below and get it for me?"

Franklin held out the key. Helene took it, and he turned on his heel.

With an eel-like movement Beatrix slipped from the divan, made a dart at the French girl and in a quick

whisper told her to go and fetch Mrs. Lester Keene at once. Whereupon, under the firm belief that this new manœuvre made her top-dog, all her audacity and self-assurance returned. With Brownie there to protect her she could really begin to enjoy herself and make Franklin wish, not only that he had never entered her room, but that he had never been born. She could play with him as a cat plays with a mouse. She could make him sting and smart under her badinage. She could make him see that he had placed himself in a position in which he would look the most egregious idiot, and eventually rout him from the scene with her laughter ringing in his ears. "It will take a better man than Mr. Pelham Franklin," she told herself, "to break me in."

She began her new tactics at once. She strolled over to where Franklin was standing and sat on the arm of a chair. Her color had come back and her eyes were sparkling. She looked like one of Sir Joshua Reynolds' pictures of Lady Hamilton come to life. "Tell me," she said, "what's your opinion of York? We may as well have a little bright conversation while Helene has gone on her domestic errand, don't you think so?"

Franklin looked at the girl with a sort of analytical examination. He admitted her courage and her spirit. He admitted her overwhelming beauty and her inherited assurance. But he began to wonder whether,— in spite of the little piteous appeal which had come involuntarily from her lips when she found herself alone with him,— there was not a streak of

callousness in her nature which put her well up among some of the almost degenerate young women of her class.

"I only know York by sight," he said. "That was enough."

"Don't you think you take things too seriously? His fur coat, Italian moustache and flamboyant tie do put one off, of course, but he's one of the comics of the city and, as such, well worth knowing. I wonder you haven't dropped in to see him sometimes. He's conveniently near to you,—luckily for me." She gave a low laugh as she added the last words.

Franklin stood with his back against one of the carved bed-posts, with his hands in his pockets. In various parts of the world he had met all sorts and conditions of women, from the red-cheeked coquettish daughters of mountaineers to the glum squaws of dilapidated Indian chiefs. Also he had come in contact with the rather cold and quizzical society women of England, the great ladies of Paris who have made immobility a fine art, the notorious cocottes of all nationalities and many of those unconsciously pathetic but perfectly happy little women who, as artists' models of the Latin quarter, live with exquisite though temporary morality in an atmosphere in which morals are as scarce as carpets and as little needed. His acquaintanceship with all these various types had been casual, but he had been interested enough in them to study their characteristics, their mannerisms and their tricks. But here, in Beatrix Vanderdyke, was a girl who didn't come under any of the six types of women.

She didn't conform in any one way either to his preconceived ideas of herself. Even his brutality hadn't disturbed her. She was still as unruffled as a white fan-tailed pigeon. Her eyes still gleamed with mocking laughter and there was not one single sign of fear, or even of nervousness, in her easiness and grace. His interest in her grew with every moment of delay and her desirability became more and more obvious with every moment that passed. He might have been inclined to let her off had she shown any weakness. His anger might have grown cold had she let him see anything of outraged maidenly modesty. But her present attitude egged him on, added fuel to his fire and doubled his desire to break her will.

"What do you propose to do to-morrow and the day after?" she asked, as though she had been married to him for some time and wanted to make her plans.

The question startled Franklin. "Sufficient for the night," he said.

Beatrix gave one of the tantalizing little bows which were so annoying to her mother. "I see! Probably I shall take my estimable, but rather irritating companion to Europe by the first possible boat. As Mrs. Franklin, I shall be doubly welcomed in English society. The combined and much-paragraphed wealth of our two families will make me a very romantic figure even in England, where blood is wrongly supposed to weigh more than money-bags. It will be very refreshing to be a free agent at last. I wonder what sort of thrill you'll get when you see my

face in the *Sketch* and *Tatler* among actresses and cabinet ministers' wives and trans-Atlantic duchesses! By this time, of course, the epoch-making news of our alliance,— as Aunt Honoria calls it,— will have been flashed to the far ends of the earth. What'll you do if any legal person asks to see our marriage lines?"

The sheer impertinence of this young woman left him wordless, until, followed by the French maid, Mrs. Lester Keene,— hastily dressed in a discreet Jaeger dressing-gown,— fluttered tremulously in, hurried over to the girl who was popularly supposed to be in her charge, and put her arms dramatically around her shoulders. Then he cursed ripely beneath his breath.

Mrs. Lester Keene was one of those numerous women whose sense of the romantic, whose belief in the lowness of human nature and whose relish for melodrama were the result of having lived a placid, uneventful, incompetent and wholly protected life. Like a boy who is a constant attendant at the movies and carries home with him a keen desire to murder his baby brother and brain his little friends with his father's wood-chopper, Amelia Keene had derived a distorted view of the life and people beyond her horizon from an absolutely quenchless thirst for sensational novels, which she drank in, firmly believing that they gave true pictures of men, women and events.

To Beatrix, who knew this kindly, ineffectual, ordinary little woman through and through, it was funny to see the manner in which she "believed the worst," — to use one of her own favorite phrases,— of what

she saw from a first quick glance. The lofty, museum-like chamber so little suggested the bedroom of a young girl or of any woman except a painted harridan who was accustomed to being surrounded, even in her most intimate moments with grotesque acquaintances, that the presence of Franklin there might have meant nothing. It was conceivable that he and Beatrix, who had the same royal way of disdaining the laws of convention if it suited their purpose to do so, might have arranged to meet there in order to be out of the family eye and to discuss the chaos in which they both stood. It was as unromantic a meeting place as the great echoing hall of the Grand Central Station or the foyer of the Metropolitan Opera House. But Amelia Keene, whose excitement since her few minutes' conversation with Beatrix before dinner had churned her into a condition almost approaching apoplexy, seized with instant avidity at the chance of adding drama to the scene in which she had been called upon to take a part.

"Oh, my darling! My darling!" she cried. "Thank God you sent for me! Am I in time?"

This was altogether too much for Beatrix. She threw one look at her unruffled reflection in the mirror and another at Franklin, the very epitome of self-control, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of a burst of laughter which left her utterly weak. Even Franklin, who was in no mood for hilarity, smiled at the obvious inanity of the remark.

Mrs. Lester Keene turned from one to the other with an air of comical indignation. *She* saw noth-

ing to laugh at. If there had been any fun in all this, why had she been sent for? Her age and her position in that house gave her the right to protect her untamable charge. The mere fact, if such a fact could be mere, that a man was in the bedroom of this young girl was in itself a frightful shock to all her inherited ideas of propriety. To her, novel-fed as she was, Franklin could not be anything but a desperate character, a menace to virtue, a man of the world. He and Beatrix might look at it from the callous modern angle, but she had made up her mind that she was called upon to perform a great rescue and to stand as the representative of Chastity and Moral Goodness,— and like all the women of her type she consciously dignified these terms with capital letters. The only thing that she regretted was that she had done her hair for the night and had not given herself time to touch her face with a powder-puff.

As soon as Beatrix had recovered herself and was able to speak again, she unlaced herself from Mrs. Keene's plump, well-meaning arms and pushed her gently to the nearest chair. "Pull yourself together, Brownie dear," she said. "I hope I sha'n't have to keep you out of bed longer than a few minutes. I sent for you because you had very little opportunity of speaking to Mr. Franklin to-day and he's in a particularly brilliant mood. As you know, I like you to share my pleasures, Brownie, dear." She threw a look of triumph at Franklin, which said as plainly as spoken words, "My game, my friend!"

Franklin caught her meaning. He shot out a laugh

and answered her aloud. "Don't you believe it. I have all night at my disposal." And after trying several chairs he sat down in one that had arms and a slanting back, made himself completely comfortable and eyed the newcomer with such interest that she bristled beneath his gaze.

Summing up the state of the game,— it was still in this way that she regarded this amazing episode inconceivable except when conducted by these two products of a social system peculiar to America,— Beatrix didn't like the look of things. It had seemed to her that the entrance of Mrs. Keene would reduce the position to one of such absurdity that Franklin would be only too glad to take himself off with as much dignity as he could muster up. His tenacity took her breath away. What sort of a man was this who intended to stick to his point even in the face of a witness?

Not having been endowed with as much humor as would slip through a sugar-sifter, Mrs. Lester Keene had the faculty of jumping in where angels fear to tread. Her love and admiration for Beatrix were the biggest things in her life,— far bigger than her nebulous marriage and her occasional social triumphs in suburban London. It gave her a sort of false courage and carried her over all conventional bunkers which her provincial up-bringing had erected between herself and the truth. There was therefore a touch of heroism in the way in which she turned upon Franklin. "How long have you been here?" she demanded.

"I'm not sure," said Franklin.

"Time flies when one is interested," said Beatrix, with a charming smile.

"What right have you to be here at all?"

"Ask my wife," said Franklin, drily.

"She isn't your wife, and you know it."

"I am the only man who does," said Franklin.

"And for that reason your behavior is inexcusable and unforgivable. It is not that of a gentleman. I am astounded that a man who bears such a name as yours could descend to these depths."

She had never spoken to anyone like this before, not even to the little servant who, far away in the past, had brushed her hair and mislaid her hair-pins. She was surprised at herself. She felt, with a thrill of curious excitement, that she was rising bravely to a great occasion. Franklin remained patient. He felt sorry for this obviously weak woman who was notoriously no more able to cope with Beatrix than could a canvas screen with a fifty-mile gale. She was doing her best and he respected her. It was not so much her fault as her misfortune that the result was farcical. He caught a look of amusement in the eyes of his antagonist, and waiving all feeling of enmity in a moment of sympathy, smiled back at her. He shrugged his shoulders and said nothing, and so Mrs. Keene, now oiled up, started off again.

"It doesn't require any imagination to know what your intentions are," she said, her choice of words becoming more and more high-flown and her rather fat chin quivering under her emotion. "You seek

to take advantage of a young girl who has placed herself in a most dangerous position. I have no words in which to say how despicable —" Her voice broke.

Beatrix patted her shoulder. "There, there, Brownie dear! There, there! Don't take it so much to heart. The last half-an-hour has been full of fun and I've enjoyed it all enormously, and presently when Mr. Franklin comes to the conclusion that after all this is the twentieth century, he'll recover his chivalry and find some other way in which to pay me out."

"Then all I've got to say is this," said Mrs. Lester Keene: "the sooner he comes to that conclusion the better. You, my dear, ought to be in bed and asleep. And after my recent attack of lumbago, I don't think anyone has the right to keep me out of bed as late as this."

Franklin got up and held out his right arm. "I'm so sorry. Allow me to escort you to the door," he said.

"And you intend to go to your own room?"

Beatrix held her breath. On the answer to that question everything that she could see in the future depended.

"This is my room," said Franklin. And when the little lady drew back he went behind her chair, put his hands gently under her elbows, lifted her up and ran her, a perfect mass of impotent protest, to and through the door of the maid's room, which he locked. He knew that Mrs. Keene dared not make a fuss,

and returned to face Beatrix once more, with a curious smile. "All square at the turn," he said.

"Well played, sir," replied Beatrix, generously.

A lugubrious clock that was somewhere in that unsuitable room struck twelve. Through the open windows came the raucous enthusiasm of the frogs on a close-by pond. Their imitation of the mechanical noises made by a factory in full blast was more exact than usual. A local cock flung out his throaty challenge to other barn-yard sheiks and was answered from near and far. A full moon in a sky that was very mosaic of stars laid a magic light upon the earth and water.

Beatrix heaved a little sigh. She was beginning to feel tired. Excitement was burning low, and Nature, whom she was in the habit of ignoring with characteristic imperiousness, demanded sleep. Franklin was not to be beaten by tricks, it seemed, or turned off by sarcasm. She must change her tactics and see how honesty would work.

"You'll go now, won't you?" she said quietly, with an offer of friendship that was usually irresistible.

Franklin shook his head and stood firm.

"No? Oh, I think so. There isn't any need to carry your strong man performance any farther. You've quite convinced me that education and all the advantages of civilization mean nothing to me. I'll take it for granted that they mean just as little to you. In a word, I'll own myself punished and give you the game. Will that do?"

"No," said Franklin. "That's not good enough."

Beatrix stood thoughtfully in front of him, with her hands behind her back, drooping a little like a flower in the evening. Her new and utter naturalness made her seem startlingly young and immature and different. Franklin hardly recognized in this Beatrix the brilliant, sparkling, insolent, triumphant creature who had turned the tables on her family and claimed his help as a sportsman without one iota of consideration for him or the future. But he refused to weaken. He realized that if he allowed himself to drift even into the approach of sympathy she would twist him round her little finger. She deserved no mercy. He would give her none. She had had the temerity to place him high up among the world's fools and she must pay the full price for the privilege.

"Perhaps you don't know," she said, "how much it costs me to retire from any sort of contest until the result is hopelessly against me. I've only done it once before, and that was in a tennis tournament at Palm Beach last winter, when I went on playing, with a sprained ankle, and fainted. I don't intend to faint now, but I'm very, very tired. Won't you let me give up?"

Franklin shook his head again. "This is not anything like the little games that you kill time with," he said. "I'm not Sutherland York, nor am I one of the green youths who help you to get through monotonous days. I have been just as spoiled as you have and this can't end until my vanity has been healed. You know that as well as I do."

"Oh, yes," she said frankly, "I understand. If I stood in your shoes I should feel as you do and be just as brutal in my desire for revenge. But put yourself in mine for a minute. You can if you will. You have imagination. The mere fact that you've been in my room for an hour and made me undergo the worst sort of humiliation before my maid and my companion ought to be sufficient to heal any ordinary type of vanity, however severe the wound. Come, now. I don't ask you to be fair. I don't deserve that. But be big and get off that awfully high horse. What d'you say? Shall I cry quits?" She held out her hand with the charming smile which had never failed since the time when she was the little queen of her big nursery.

Franklin compelled himself to ignore it. "No," he said. "I'm here to make you feel the spurs for the first time in your life, and I shall stay."

In a flash Beatrix changed back to the personality behind which she hid her best and undiscovered self. She threw back her head and squared her shoulders and brought her exquisite slim young body into an attitude of audacious challenge and ran her eyes over Franklin with an expression in which there was contempt and amusement.

"Then you may make up your mind to a long and arduous job," she said. "It'll take a better man than you to break me in."

"We'll see about that," he said.

She burst into a derisive laugh. Her blood was up. This man had frightened her, amused her, interested

her. He had won her admiration, even a little of her sympathy. Now he bored her. He had stayed too long, harped on one subject too steadily. She might consent to play at something else, but this game was threadbare. She refused to entertain the possibility of his attempting to carry out his threat beyond taking possession of her room, which, in itself, was impertinent enough.

"What precisely do you imagine that you can do?" she asked, with the very essence of scorn.

Franklin's patience had almost run out, too. "I don't *imagine* that I can do anything. I know exactly what I'm *going* to do."

"Is that so? Do tell me."

"Conform in detail to the right you've given me," he said, "without any further argument."

"Beginning how, pray?"

"By tearing that frock off your back, unless you have your maid in right away."

"You wouldn't dare!" she said, scoffing at him.

That was the worst word she could have chosen. To dare Franklin to do a thing was to guarantee that it was done. With the blood in his head he laid instant hands on her and ripped the chiffon from one soft white shoulder.

There was an inarticulate cry, a brief, breathless struggle, and the next instant he received a blow on the face that made him see stars.

"You little tyrant!" he said, with a short laugh. "That's your spirit, is it?"

He made for her again, angrier than he had ever

been in his life. But she darted away like a beautiful fish, and with her round shoulder gleaming in the moonlight stood close to an open window, her breasts rising and falling, her nostrils distended, her eyes like two great stars, her face as white as the feathers of a white dove.

"Touch me again and I'll jump out of this window!"

"I don't believe you," he said, but remained standing.

"I swear to God I will!"

He knew that she meant it. "You'd break every bone in your body," he said.

"That would be better than having your hands on me again."

He made a spring and caught her by the wrists. "Now jump!"

"Oh, very clever," she said, with superb sarcasm. "You've evidently made a hobby of fighting with women."

That stung Franklin. "I don't call you a woman," he blurted out. "There's been nothing of the woman in you since the day you knew enough words to order one of your nurses about. You're a hybrid, the production of a mixture of two species,—labor and wealth. The labor in you, inherited from the man who made your first millions, is tainted with revolt, the wealth with the damned despotism that creates it. You're no more a woman than this barrack is a home, or this absurd place a bedroom. You're a grotesque who has been brought up in a nightmare.

You walk on a world that is too small for your feet. You're out of drawing like a woman in a fashion-plate. You're a sort of female Gulliver on an earth peopled with pigmies. You almost believe that you're Almighty and that when you raise your finger life must be reset like a chess-board. And you're perfectly right. It can and is and will be so long as money counts. I know it and do it, for you and I hold a piece each of the same wand. But you're up against *me* now, and you've used me as you might have used a trained servant, or an eager parasite, ready and willing to lick the blacking off your boots for the sake of what may fall unnoticed from your purse, and, by God, you're not going to get away with it."

He controlled her across to the door of the maid's room and pushed it open with his foot. "Come out," he said, "and get Mrs. Franklin ready for the night." Then he marched Beatrix to and into the dressing-room, followed by Helene. Reflected in the mirrors there were not three, but thirty people. "I'll give you fifteen minutes," he continued, "and for the sake of all concerned don't be longer. Is that agreed?"

Beatrix met his eyes. Her spirit was unbroken, her chin at the same tilt, her attitude not one whit less contemptuously assured, but he saw in the slight inclination of her golden head the acknowledgment that he held all the cards.

He turned on his heel and left the room, went over to an open window and drew in long breaths of air.

He and she, children of the same nightmare, as he

had called it, had both used the word vanity about the thing which impelled him to punish. But as he looked out into the sane night, magic only from the moon's touch, it came to him that to dismiss it as vanity was to slur over the true meaning of that before which he was urged. It was the labor in him, the revolt against the despotism of wealth that had come back again in his fight with his fellow-hybrid, and once more labor was top-dog. How would he use his power?

For fifteen minutes he stood there with his heart thumping, his hands hot, the exhilaration of success running through his blood like alcohol. And then, to the second, came the sweet diaphanous figure, which, with the dignity of a brave but conquered enemy, crossed to the foolish bed.

Franklin watched her go, her gleaming hair all about her like a bridal veil, her head held high, her lovely face untouched by fear. He watched her pause while the maid opened up the bed, and then slip in. He called the French girl, gave her the key to her door and waited until she had gone. Then he walked to the foot of the bed and stood there silently until Beatrix raised her eyes.

"If you and I," he said, with extreme distinctness, "were the only two living people on a desert island and there was not the faintest hope of our ever being taken back to the world, I would build you a hut at the farthest end of it and treat you as a man."

He wheeled round, unlocked the door, went out into the passage and away.

Only by having seen the expression on Beatrix's face after he had gone would he have known how tremendously well he had revenged himself.

VIII

FRANKLIN'S bare statement to Malcolm Fraser that he was going to the Vanderdyke pastoral party merely to meet Ida Larpent left his friend interested and speculative. The lady's name was as familiar to Fraser as to the other men who dined at houses a little to the east and rather less than that to the west of Fifth Avenue. The lady's arresting face had often stirred his dormant sense of psychology, but he never had had the opportunity of saying more than "How do you do?" or "Good-bye" to her. He so obviously didn't count in the scheme of things as they appealed to Mrs. Larpent.

According to the Social Register, however, Mrs. Larpent lived in East Fifty-sixth Street and was the widow of Captain Claude Elcho Larpent of the 21st Lancers, a nephew of Field Marshal Viscount Risborough. That was all. If this precious volume, which is the vade-mecum of so many people who murmur the word society with a hiss that can be heard from one end of the town to the other, had attempted to do justice to the beautiful Ida, at least one-half of the volume would have been devoted to the story of her antecedents and career. Born at Paterson, New Jersey, the only daughter of a pushing and energetic little chemist named McKenna, who had married in a

moment of the wildest kind of romance a little, slight, white-faced Russian girl who had left her country among a batch of unsavory emigrants and found employment in a button factory, Ida,— who can tell why? — was marked out from her tiniest years for the oldest profession in the world. One would have thought, to look at her parents,— the father a pugnacious, industrious, thrifty, red-headed Scotch-American, the mother a wistful, grateful, self-effacing little woman who, if there were any justice in this world, would several times have received the distinguished service order for her many acts of unnoticed heroism,— she would have been a bright, brave, practical and perhaps even pretty little girl. Instead of which, to everyone's astonishment and to the utter confusion of the chemist and his wife, Ida resembled nothing so much as a child of the aristocracy. She was thoroughbred from head to foot, perfectly made, with a small oval face and large wide-apart eyes, tiny wrists and ankles and black hair as fine as silk. The paradox of her having been born in the small common-place quarters above a second-rate store, amidst all the untidiness of a place in which the mother did her own housework, was not lost on the parents. They were proud of this fairy-like baby, but they were also frightened of her. They realized that she was in the nature of a freak. It seemed to them that she had come by accident; that, as a matter of fact, they had no right to her. They almost persuaded themselves into the belief, as the child grew up, that she was a changeling; that an unseen hand must have stolen their own sturdy, freckled and ram-

pagious infant, and for some unaccountable reason slipped this exquisite little thing into her place.

There was, as time passed, an element of tragedy about this miracle or accident or mistake,— these words and others were used,— especially when Ida began to find her tongue and her feet. More and more she seemed to be an indignant hot-house plant in a little cabbage-patch. Her parents, poor souls, grew more and more awkward and unhappy in her presence. They had the uncanny feeling always that she was criticising them and their mode of speech and their slummachy way of life. The affection and love which they had been only too willing to give her after the shock of her early appearance wore away, turned into reluctant deference and a constant self-conscious desire to make their apartment and themselves more tidy for her. Even at the age of ten she turned her mother into a maid, quietly insisted that her hair should be brushed every night and saw to it that she was dressed and undressed, manicured and shampooed. She demanded bath salts and scent from the store and the best of soaps and powders. "Do this! Do that!" she would say, and if they were not done she raised her voice and stamped her foot, while a sort of flame seemed to come from her eyes. No one had ever seen her cry after she had learned to walk.

The McKenna circle of friends, consisting of fellow-storekeepers and the Austro-Hungarian musician who was the leader of the little orchestra at the Paterson Theatre, watched Ida's early years with almost breathless astonishment and a kind of disbelief. They ac-

cepted her much in the same way as they would, under the pressure of warm friendship, have accepted a pet marmoset or a cursing parrot or a dog with a cat's tail. They noticed, with many comments, that she grew up altogether without filial affection; that she treated her parents as though they were paid attendants, calling her father "Sandy," as his particular friends did, and her mother "Alla," and with the most startling self-assurance making them conform to all her wishes. It was most uncanny. Michlikoff, the bird's-nest-headed musician, who had a sneaking belief in the occult and who read up all that he could find on the subject of transmigration of souls, endeavored to persuade his friends, in voluble broken English, that Ida was a princess born again. With all those who came from places other than Missouri, he succeeded.

It was a perturbed and constrained household in which this unexpected child grew up,— a household that, to the little bandy Scot's never-quite-hidden disgust, was the subject of steady gossip in the town. His first ambition naturally was to see the list of his customers swell, but not at the expense of his pride and self-respect. Those two things, frequently mentioned, were very dear to him. It seemed to him, too, that the family affairs of a man who kept a drug-store should be out of the region of gossip. He and his still pretty wife were glad, infinitely glad, when the time arrived for their daughter to attend the public school. It was only while she was out of the apartment that the mother could go about her work in com-

fort and without being constantly called away from her domestic duties. The freckled, red-headed little chemist only felt happy when he saw this girl sail out with her books and turn down the street towards the school-house, with her chin held high and her astonishing eyes filled with a sort of scorn for all the passers-by. At school she was not a success. She didn't mix well. The other children held aloof from her. She was obviously out of place amongst them and they resented her presence in the class-rooms. The boys admired her from a distance, fell into self-conscious silence when she approached and whispered about her when she passed by. The girls were antagonistic. They were jealous of her pretty clothes, awed by her lofty silences and surprised at her proficiency with her books.

On her seventeenth birthday Ida went to New York, saying that she would be back to supper. But with supper came a cold-blooded note which ran like this:

"Dear Sandy and Alla:

"I'm through with your one-eyed town and the drug-store and provincialism. I'm going to begin to live and dress as I ought to, and there's only one way to do it,—the easiest way. I applied for a job in the chorus of the Winter Garden for the new show and got it. It was easy. I looked very nice in my Sunday clothes and the stage manager said I was a peach. Rehearsals start to-morrow and I shall stay at a boarding-house with some of the other girls. So please send me thirty dollars to go on with and the rest of my things. The address is 302 West 46th Street. I will let you know when to send me more money. You will both be glad to get rid of

me, but not so glad as I am to be out of Paterson. I am starting on the bottom rung of the ladder and I am going to climb to the top, whatever I have to pay for it. Judging from the way the men in the office look at me they will have to do most of the paying. "IDA."

This was read by Mr. and Mrs. McKenna in horrified silence, but with a mutual deep sigh of relief, and put away in a secret place. The only time they ever saw her again was once when they made a pilgrimage to Manhattan and watched her from the balcony of what was once a show ring in Broadway, and saw her, almost nude, flitting like a butterfly in the glare of light.

One other note they received from this curious person, and this, enclosing a cheque for two hundred dollars, contained the news that Ida was going to England with a musical comedy company in which she was playing a small part. And that was the last they ever heard of her. She had come like a stranger and like a stranger she departed. The cheque they never used. With an odd sensation of having been insulted by it they put it in a drawer among receipts and specimens of patent medicines and left it there. And then, happy again, they returned to their habitual untidiness and the daily routine of hard work and endeavored to forget. They regarded it as a blessing that nature had punished them only once. And when eventually they removed themselves to a larger and more pretentious store they left a photograph of a little wide-eyed girl among their debris and felt as though a weight had been lifted from their shoulders.

If they had been able to watch the London newspapers, especially the *Sketch* and *Tatler,* they would have quivered at the sight of this strange girl in many graceful attitudes and in the scantiest of costumes as she appeared in almost weekly photographic studies, and they would have gasped if they had presently read the glowing accounts of the marriage of Ida McKenna to Captain Claude Elcho Larpent, nephew of Field Marshal Viscount Risborough, at St. George's, Hanover Square. The headings of these paragraphs had it that Society had once more made an alliance with the stage, but the gushing paragraphs that came beneath stated (how amazed the chemist would have been) that the bride came of one of the best American families, her father being a famous scientist whose country house was at Paterson, New Jersey, and her mother a distant connection of the Russian Chancellor.

Ida Larpent took her place in English society as though to the manner born. She became the beautiful Mrs. Larpent without turning a hair. She ran a little house in Mayfair on her husband's excellent income as though Mayfair had been her playground since childhood. She entertained the younger set and a sprinkling of duchesses with all the insouciance of minor royalty, and plunged her husband into debt in the same cold-blooded way that she had run up bills in her native town, from which on clear days one can see the Simelike unbelievable buildings of the great city.

Claude Larpent was passionately in love with his beautiful and expensive wife. With all the careless

pride of a mere boy of twenty-six he gave her the reins, and so long as she made some return for his love never grumbled at her recklessness or her intimacy with men whom he, before marriage, would not have touched with the end of a barge-pole. He trusted her. She was his wife. She had chosen him from among all the men who would eagerly have knelt at her feet. In his weakness he stood lovingly by while she relentlessly ran him on the rocks and into bankruptcy. But it was not until one bad night when he discovered by accident that she had sold herself for diamonds to a most atrocious vieux marcheur that he confessed himself broken, exchanged from his crack regiment to the Houssa Police and disappeared to the West Coast of Africa, the white man's grave. It was exactly three years after the bells of St. George's had rung their merry peal that the obituary notice in the London papers contained a few lines to the effect that Claude Elcho Larpent had fallen a victim to black water fever. The truth was that this foolish young man had died of whisky and a broken heart, and had been buried in the bush mourned and respected by the sturdy little men whom he had treated with that mixture of firmness and camaraderie characteristic of the English officer. His widow, still in the first flush of youth and beauty, was left penniless, but bejewelled, and in the ordinary course of events,— men being awake to the fact that they need not marry her,— came under the protection of a wealthy railway man who planted her temporarily in a pleasant portion of Mayfair, rather sarcastically named Green Street, Berkeley Square. The beautiful

Mrs. Larpent thereupon lost a certain amount of caste, but not very much. Duchesses dropped her, but semi-society drank her wines without a twinge and enjoyed many week-ends at her beautiful house on the banks of the Thames near Henley. Younger sons and the stage herded about her, accepting gladly enough her lavish hospitality. The only thing that Ida Larpent had inherited from her father was thrift. And before the railway magnate disappeared from his surroundings in an apoplectic fit, she had managed to put by a large enough sum of money to bring her in somewhere about six hundred pounds a year, and upon that, feeling the need of a change of air and surroundings, she returned to America.

When Franklin met her first, during one of his brief visits to New York, he found her very cosily ensconced in a tiny apartment, gracefully furnished, over a dressmaker's shop in East Fifty-sixth Street, from which, clothed to perfection, she drove forth nightly in her limousine to dine at the best houses. She had come to the United States to catch a husband. Her experience had taught her that a husband is a more permanent institution than a protector. She was determined to marry money. The need of it, in bulk, was essential to her comfort and peace of mind. In order to do so, she lived on her capital, thus conveying the impression that she was very well off. Time after time she could have marched fairly rich young men off to church by their ears, but she was very fastidious,—not so much in regard to them, as men, as to their bank accounts. She didn't intend to make a second mistake.

Then she met Pelham Franklin at that sort of sham Bohemian supper at which all the women wear diamonds and all the men are clean and civilized. She fell in love with him before she found out who he was. His brown face and outdoor manner and the air he had about him of not carrying a superfluous ounce of flesh, his utter incompetency as a drawing-room man, which was proved by his not paying her a single compliment or saying anything personal, delighted her. She was sick of those others who all looked alike and said the same things and counted for nothing. Franklin came as a change. His masculinity appealed to her. For the first time in her life passion stirred and her self-complacency was shaken. Before the night was out she heard his name and gave thanks to all her gods for putting him in her way. He came at the moment when her money was running out and the greater part of her morning mail consisted of demands for payment from impatient and long-suffering trades-people. During the fortnight that Franklin remained in town she concentrated upon him, using all her wiles to bring him up to the scratch. Malcolm Fraser was not in town at that time, nor were any of the other men with whom Franklin was on terms of intimate friendship. Feeling lonely and at a rather loose end he saw a good deal more of Mrs. Larpent, under those circumstances, than he would have done in normal conditions. He took her to dinner at Sherry's and the Ritz, night after night, and was delighted at her readiness to do the theatres with him. It was too cold-blooded a business to see the plays alone. Several times, too, he spent a

late hour after supper in her charming little drawing-room smoking and chatting. They knew many of the same people in London and Paris. He flirted a little with her — certainly. Why not? Her beauty was unique, her way of expressing herself quite brilliant and amusing, and that air of regal mystery that was all about her piqued curiosity. He had never the least intention of doing more than merely flirt, and not being a lady's man and being therefore without conceit it never occurred to him that his quick friendship could be misconstrued or his frank admiration could possibly lead her to believe that he nourished even the germ of an idea of following these pleasant evenings up with anything serious. He went away under the impression that he would be forgotten as quickly as he had been taken up, and was utterly and blissfully unaware of the fact that Mrs. Larpent had fallen in love with him. He would have roared with incredulous laughter at the mere suggestion.

Thus things had been left when Franklin felt the call of the sea and took Malcolm Fraser for a cruise in the yacht on which he spent the best hours of his life. He wrote a little letter to Mrs. Larpent on the morning he went out of town and thanked her warmly for her kindness and "looked forward tremendously to seeing her directly he got back." Into these few rather boyish and certainly sincere words Ida, making a most uncharacteristic blunder in psychology, read what she most wanted to read,— love, and, of course, eventually marriage. During his absence she marked time impatiently, but with a new smile on her red lips

and a gentler manner towards those about her, keeping her tradesmen in a good temper by throwing out tiny hints of impending good fortune. It was solely to meet Franklin again that this sophisticated, ambitious, luxury-loving, unscrupulous woman became a member of the Vanderdyke house-party,— to see again the man who, alone among men, had touched her heart and awakened her passion. Like a girl from a Convent school, young and sweet and inarticulate, she went. Imagine her anger and distress at finding on her arrival at the Vanderdyke barrack that she was asked to add her congratulations to those of the family and their friends on the marriage of Franklin and that "damn girl," as she called her. Imagine it! The shock, the disappointment, the shattering of her one good dream ——

IX

When Franklin left the bedroom in which he had gone through the strangest hour of his life, he went into the room which had been allotted to him and from which some of his things had been taken, and stood for a little while at an open window taking in long, deep breaths. His mind was in too chaotic a state to permit him to think patiently of going to sleep, and in the back of it, now that his anger had cooled, there was a growing feeling of self-disgust at the way in which he had treated Beatrix Vanderdyke. He was sorry that he had allowed himself to be carried in front of a wave of extreme indignation and he told himself, a little ruefully, that after all it wasn't for him to take the law into his own hands. He called himself, with unusual sarcasm, an egotist, an individualist, and cursed his vanity which rose up whenever anyone attempted to make a fool of him, and was aghast to discover how very little it took to make a man lose the effects and influence of civilization.

And when he endeavored to look into the future that was staring him in the face — the future all disturbed and upset by the unexpected entrance into his life of the girl who had treated him merely as a pawn upon her lightly considered chess-board, he found himself wholly unable to see through the maze that stretched out in front of him. He was no longer in the splendid

position of a free lance. He was no longer able to pass through his days unencumbered with any sort of responsibility. He saw that he was to pay the full price for that moment of aberration during which he had permitted himself to fall in with Beatrix's daringly manufactured lie. It was with a feeling that gave him back something of his self-respect that he realized that it was impossible to give Beatrix away until he had her permission to do so. She had appealed to him as a sportsman and it was as a sportsman, as a man who stuck to the rules of whatever game he played, that he endeavored to report daily to the particular god that he worshipped.

Sick of himself, sick of his room, sick of everything, he went out presently into the passage,— a wide, dimly lit passage hung with old masters and carpeted with Persian rugs which were beautiful and rare enough to hang upon the walls of an art gallery,— and went slowly down-stairs into the hall. For some moments he paced up and down this deserted place asking himself how he was to kill the night. He had no patience for books,— he very rarely read anything except technical things on hunting and fishing,— but eventually he made his way to the library, the nicest and most reasonable room in that uncomfortable, luxurious house. He was aware immediately of the presence of someone standing at the window. The moonlight fell on a dark head and a tall, graceful figure. He turned up the lights and found himself looking into the reproachful and rather sarcastic eyes of Ida Larpent.

She was still in the noticeably simple and very perfect dress that she had worn at dinner,— a soft, black thing not cut slavishly to the existing fashion, but made to suit her peculiar beauty and slender, hipless lines. Cut down to the waist at the back, it seemed to retain its place in front by a miracle. One large, star-shaped brooch studded as closely with diamonds as a clear sky with stars was fastened between her breasts, and jet beads glinted here and there about the graceful skirt that hid her feet. A band of small pearls was placed like an aureola round her head, from which hung one large insolent diamond just where her hair was parted on her low forehead. She wore no rings.

She moved away from the window and leaned lightly against one of the pillars, running her eyes slowly up and down Franklin's tall, wiry figure. She might easily have been standing for an artist as the modern representation of Lucretia Borgia.

"Well!" she said, with a just perceptible upward inflection of her bell-like voice.

To Franklin she seemed to be symbolical of his lost freedom, the unconscious reminder of the good days when he could go and come at will, answer immediately to a whim and move to a fancy as a sail to a breeze. During the course of that afternoon and evening he had not attempted to do more than pass the time of day with her, and had forgotten, in the sudden whirlpool into which he had been dragged by Beatrix, that he had arranged to meet her under that roof to renew a very charming friendship. It was now easy enough to see from her expression and manner that he was to

undergo a bad quarter-of-an-hour for his lack of attention. He deeply regretted to have hurt her feelings but was not sorry that he had gone into the room. If there was anything unpleasant to be faced it was his habit to face it and get it over. He did not suffer from moral cowardice.

"Well!" he said.

"I've just finished writing you a letter."

"That's very nice of you."

There was a kind of laugh. "I hope you'll think so after you've read it."

"I'll read it now, if I may," said Franklin, holding out his hand.

"You may as well." But she tore the letter into small pieces and dropped them at her feet. "No. Why should I give you the pleasure of seeing how much you've made me suffer?"

The word suffer and the unconcealed break in the woman's voice puzzled and surprised Franklin. Was she acting? He saw no reason why she should. It never entered into the very recesses of his mind that there could be any sentiment on her part. Why should there be? "That wouldn't give me any pleasure," he said, with a sort of boyish sincerity.

She looked at him a little eagerly, saw that there was nothing in his eyes that she needed, nodded two or three times and shrugged her shoulders. It was a hard thing to be made to confess that this man who was so desirable had merely passed a few hours with her for the lack of a friend. A new thing, too, after her wide experience of men. Nevertheless, she had run through

the last of her remaining money. This was no hour for pride. She stood in dire and urgent need of funds. It was impossible for him to be her husband, but well within the range of her ability to see that he became her banker.

"Did you know that I was in the library?" she asked, making one more effort to prove herself wrong in her quick intuition. This was probably, she told herself, a marriage of convenience.

"No."

"You just came in by accident?"

"Yes."

"I see. Well, then, as we're here and we're both obviously in no mood for sleep, shall we while away the time with a little discussion on the short memories of men,— some men?"

"Why not?" replied Franklin, and drew up a chair for her.

But Mrs. Larpent gave a sharp, eloquent gesture. The chair ought rightly to have wheeled itself into the darkest corner. "I'll stand, thanks. Oddly enough I feel volcanic like most women at the end of their tether who have been chucked."

The abrupt, descriptive colloquialism came strangely from her. She was so finished, so apparently fastidious. Also she spoke with the slight drawl and affectation that some English people acquire after much practice, and imagine to be smart.

"Chucked?" he echoed. "How? By whom?"

This gave Mrs. Larpent a double opportunity to get rid of her spleen and chagrin in an outburst of hys-

teria and to work on Franklin's sympathies by letting him see that she must have money or sell her jewels. It didn't matter to her what he thought of her now.

"By you! By you!" she said, her voice all broken with emotion. "You came into my life when I was most lonely, most in need of tenderness and kind treatment and on the very edge of a crumbling cliff. I didn't believe that you were playing the usual game with me. You didn't seem to be that kind of man. I thought,— yes, even I, who have grappled with life and am without much faith in human nature,— that you saw all that is good and decent in me and answered to the love that you had set alight in my heart. Why else, I asked myself, did you come day after day and night after night, in a city reeking with people who would have been eager to amuse you, and claim me in a loneliness that was almost equal to mine? Why else did you let me see the best of yourself and treat me with the respect that a man only shows to the woman whom he is going to ask to be his wife? Most of the men I meet are different. They only see in me an unattached woman living on a shoe-string, willing enough to sell her beauty for cash. But in you I thought I saw honesty and sincerity and chivalry, and whether you knew it or not you let me wander into a fool's paradise and dream of a home and a great love and peace. And on the strength of the little note you wrote before you sailed I saw the promise of security from dunning creditors and hope rising over my unhappy horizon. I blurt all this out now only because I'm still suffering

from the shock of finding you married. You must forgive me."

She turned abruptly on her heel, with her hands over her face, and stood once more in the window silvered by the moon. Even with those tears on her face and that pain in her heart she was able to congratulate herself on having made the speech of her life.

Franklin was appalled. His knowledge of women was as small as that of most men whose lives are spent in the open. Of the Larpent type he was wholly ignorant. He believed that she was telling the truth and her confession, made with trembling lips and streaming eyes and a broken voice, hurt him. He had never listened to anything so painful or so horribly embarrassing. What could he do or say? How could he possibly explain that her beauty had only made a skin-deep impression and that he had only regarded her as a most delightful companion. And so he said nothing. It was too difficult. He just remained standing with his shoulders squared and his hands behind his back and willed that woman, for God's sake, to stop crying and tell him what he could do to make things easier for her. And the thing that he wished with all his soul was that he was back on his yacht, with the clean night air brushing across his face and the laughter of his intimate pals ringing in his ears.

During the curious, uneasy moments that followed he let his eyes wander about the huge room with its pseudo-Gothic ceiling and pillars, its book-lined walls and its numerous cases of old Bibles and first editions, collections of rare and wonderful bindings, and the

assortment of deep arm-chairs and silky rugs which gave it the appearance of a room in a public library rescued from its cold formality by a lover of books, who saw no reason why they should not be enjoyed in comfort. Only one end of it was lit, and the rest was in shadow except for a shaft of silver light that pierced one of the high windows and spilt itself on the plinth of a pillar. He wondered what Mrs. Larpent would say next. He hadn't missed her hint of the need of money. He felt more than ever unhappy and uncomfortable. But on that point, at any rate, she could count on his help, difficult as it would be to put it into practice.

Mrs. Larpent gave another curious little laugh, turned and came back. Franklin glanced quickly at her. She moved closer and there was something about her mouth and nostrils that showed him that he was right in thinking that she had read his thoughts.

"What are you going to do about it?" she asked, taking advantage of the light so that the softness and whiteness of her body should not be lost. One of her smiles had never failed. She adopted it then. Even she retained her optimism.

"What you say goes," said Franklin.

"You mean that, Pelham?" Two or three steps took her within arm's reach. The light remained upon her. If this was merely a marriage of convenience he might make a suggestion that would, at any rate, give her a brief happiness.

"Of course. I only want you to — to tell me what I can do."

Optimism could not live under that suggestion, however generously meant and delicately put, of payment by cheque. Nevertheless, Ida Larpent sat down. It was bitter to see that her love was not to be returned, but good to feel that her diminished bank account was likely to be substantially refreshed. She felt like a woman who had swum out of her depth, lost her nerve, made a mighty effort and feels at last the sand against her knees. Metaphorically she drew herself wearily out of the water and with a renewed sense of confidence felt the warm sun upon her limbs.

There was something detestably cold-blooded in all this, and Franklin hated it. He had hitherto managed to keep himself free from women. They interfered with his pursuits. Why fate should have gone suddenly out of its way to plunge him into the midst of this woman stuff, as he impatiently called it, was more than he could understand.

He looked down at Ida Larpent. She was sitting in a low, red-leather chair,— the sort of thing that is supposed to belong to a room inhabited by men. Her amazing hair, as black as the wing of a crow, had been touched here and there with the tongs. It framed a face as white as marble,— a curiously small oval face, — with eyes remarkably wide apart and large and luminous; a small aristocratic nose, with sensitive nostrils which indicated passion as well as impatience, and a mouth whose lips were full and artificially red. Her small round white shoulders were more daringly bare than those of any woman he had seen, and her two fine hands looked like those in the old French pictures

which hang in those houses in Paris that were spared by the Sans-Culottes. Indeed, the whole figure, from head to foot, looked like an oil painting of a period in French history when aristocracy had reached its acme. As a companion for a man of enforced leisure and unlimited means and no ties she had everything in her favor, physically and mentally. As Franklin stood looking at her, however, with all the admiration that was due to her, he found himself unconsciously comparing her,— this exotic — this most exquisite of rare orchids,— with the fresh, buoyant, healthy, clean, proud, spoilt girl who called herself his wife.

"Will you be honest with me?" she asked.

"I haven't got much to bless myself with except that," he answered.

"Were you married when you came to my apartment in March?"

"No."

"Well, that's something," she said. "When *were* you married?"

"Does that matter?"

"Perhaps not. The fact remains. I'm naturally interested and curious, so tell me this: Was it a sudden infatuation for that child who rules the roost here, — a sudden burst of sentimentality that doesn't seem part of you, or — what? I think I have the right to ask."

"You have," said Franklin. "It was all very sudden. That's all I can tell you about it."

"I see. And now that you are tied up and more

than ever under the microscopic eye of the public — what?"

"Well,— what?"

"Are you going to be a little careless in the matter of marriage vows, or carry them out to the letter?" She stretched herself a little and smiled up at him, still fighting for the dream that had made her for a little while so young and gentle and unworldly.

"I asked you to believe that I am honest," said Franklin, who had never in his life been so puzzled as to a choice of words.

And then Mrs. Larpent got up. "I see," she said, and held out her hand. "Well, I, at any rate, have not beaten about the bush, and you have spared my feelings with very real kindness. And so good night!"

"Good night!" said Franklin.

"You can think of nothing else that you would like to say?"

Franklin had something else to say,— the question of a certain sum of money. But, like a horse brought nose up to a high jump, he refused, shook his head, and immediately added, "Yes. I'm awfully sorry about all this. Please accept my humble apologies."

Mrs. Larpent bowed, but the gracious smile on her lips was contradicted by her eyes. They were full of pain and anger. And while she still held Franklin's hand she registered an oath that she would leave no stone unturned to make him forget his honesty before many months had passed and lead her willingly into a new and beautiful dream.

"How long are you staying here?" he asked.

"I'm leaving to-morrow," she said. "It isn't awfully amusing to go through the jealous agonies of hell."

"I'll write to your apartment," said Franklin, stumbling a little over the words.

"Thank you." She took his meaning and was certain of his generosity.

He watched her go, moving with a sort of medieval dignity, an almost uncanny suggestion of having stepped out of an old frame to return to it before the finger of dawn began to rub away the night.

X

It was eleven o'clock before Beatrix opened her eyes to a new day. For two hours Mrs. Lester Keene had hovered about the room like an elderly beetle, settling here and there for a moment or two and then continuing her aimless and irresolute flitting. Two or three times she had stood over the sleeping girl and gazed with a sort of amazement at a face that looked strangely childlike, with long lashes like fans upon her cheeks and lips a little parted. Then she would take a magazine to one of the windows, read a few lines here and there without taking in their meaning and gaze at the illustrations intently without knowing what they intended to represent. The truth was that the loyal and well-meaning lady was not herself. Her constitution, not of a very sound order, had been almost shattered by her experience the night before. She had kept watch and had seen Franklin leave the bedroom shortly after he had evicted her from it, and then, with inexpressible relief and thankfulness, gone to bed, but the terrible anxiety had told upon her. Hitherto she had never been called upon to undergo more nerve-strain than is endured by a hen in a well-regulated chicken run, seeing life and adventure and passion only through the eyes of her favorite novelists. She had, however, slept very little and given orders that she should be called at half-past seven, so that she might

go early to Beatrix and give her the benefit of her advice. She still remained under the impression, poor little lady, that her advice was of the greatest assistance to the wilful, headstrong girl, even though she never made the merest pretence to follow it.

Beatrix awoke, finally, as a flower opens to the sun. "Oh! Hello, Brownie," she said, "ever-faithful! Heigh-ho! I've had such a lovely sleep. All in one piece without a dream. I feel about fifteen." She stretched herself lazily and put her arms behind her head. "Will you please tell Helene that I want a cup of tea at once,— at once, Brownie. If it doesn't come in five minutes it won't be of any use to me. You're a dear old thing to bother." She gave a little musical yawn as the fluffy-minded woman hurried to the maid's room and gave the order with that sort of mysterious urgency which is connected with embassies in moments of national crises and theatres during a dress rehearsal.

When she returned, which she did at once,— her mind being all astir with curiosity,— she saw that Beatrix was sitting up in bed with her hands clasped about her knees, her eyebrows meeting in a frown, her lips set tightly and her eyes full of anger. Mrs. Keene had never seen this expression on the girl's face before. If she had heard Franklin's parting remark she would have known the reason for it.

"It's very late, dear," said Mrs. Keene; "after eleven, and all the people have been rehearsing in the gardens for an hour."

"Oh, well, it's a charming morning. It will do

them good. I wonder if the matinée idol has shaved himself! I understand that they don't do that thing until about four o'clock in the afternoon." And then she began to laugh, more to hide her feelings than anything else.

Not even to Brownie did she intend to show what she felt about the episode of the previous night, or how deeply she resented the humiliation to which Franklin had subjected her. Never in all her life would she forget that, or forgive,— never.

"We certainly may be said to be living on the top of a volcano, Brownie. No monotony about life just now, is there?" And then she suddenly slipped out of bed, alert and full of a new idea. "Go down and see what's happening," she added. "Be my secret agent and come back with a full report of what Franklin has been doing since breakfast. Be very discreet and smile,— smile all the time, bearing in mind that you are the closest friend of a girl who has just been happily married."

"Oh, my dear," cried Mrs. Keene, "don't talk like that! Please, please don't!"

Just for one instant Beatrix allowed her companion to get a glimpse of the strain under which she was laboring. "How else should I talk?" she said, sharply. "Do you think I'm going about with my tail down like a whipped dog ——? Run along, Brownie, run along like a good little soul and do this thing for me. In the meantime I'll get up. I feel in my bones that things are going to happen to-day. Thank Heaven I'm on the top of my form, ready for

anything and everybody, even Franklin. We do manage to live, you and I, don't we?"

She escorted the amiable, fluttering woman to the door and closed it upon her, quite certain that she would return with full information. If there was one thing in which Mrs. Lester Keene was really proficient it was in spying out the lay of the land.

While bathing in the pool whose hideous Byzantine decorations were never more inappropriate than when they made a background for that sweet, slim form, Beatrix ran her mind over the position. She felt convinced that Franklin, angry and disgusted as he was, would continue to play up until he had her permission to give away the game. She knew a sportsman when she saw one. But she knew also, instinctively, that he was a poor liar, and if,— as was quite likely,— Aunt Honoria and her mother had been pumping him during the morning as to when the marriage took place and for the other details of this great romance, he had probably made a very poor showing. There might have been inconvenient questions asked by her father as to settlements, and so forth. If so, she could imagine how badly Franklin had come out without her at his side to prompt and evade and put tangents into the conversation. She was anxious and owned to it.

When Mrs. Lester Keene returned to the bedroom, slipping into it with an air of almost comic mystery, she was surprised to find Beatrix fully dressed and swinging up and down the room impatiently like a boy.

"What news on the Rialto?" she cried, with a touch of burlesque in her voice.

There was a very serious and even scared look on Brownie's face. "My dear," she said, "listen! I fear that the worst has happened." In a sort of way, Mrs. Keene reveled in the drama of it all. "Mr. Franklin was the first guest in the breakfast-room. He was very quiet and short with the servants. He drank two cups of coffee and ate hardly anything. He was joined on the veranda by your father and they walked up and down together talking earnestly for thirty-six minutes. They were then sent for by Aunt Honoria. They have been closeted ——"

"Closeted is excellent," said Beatrix. "Well done, Brownie! I thought so," she added mentally, with a sharp intake of breath.

"They have been in Miss Honoria's room,— your mother was there too,— until about ten minutes ago, when Mr. Franklin came out alone, hurried downstairs and out on the veranda, kicking one of the cane chairs on his way into the garden. My dear, God only knows what took place in that interview! Your father, Aunt Honoria and your mother are still talking. I don't understand — I really utterly fail to comprehend how you can stand there with that smile on your face, being in the midst of what seems to me to be a very terrible situation."

Beatrix whistled a little tune to keep up her courage, sat on the edge of a heavily carved table and swung her legs. "Well, what would you have me do?" she asked, with consummate coolness. "Stand on my

head, wail like one of the fat ladies in *Tristan and Isolde,* or sink back on the sofa in an attitude of Early Victorian despair?" She got up and walked to one of the open windows and stood for a moment in the sun as though to get a little necessary warmth and sympathy. Then she went back to the table and looked rather eagerly and girlishly at her altogether useless but very faithful friend. "What d'you think it all means, Brownie dear?"

Mrs. Lester Keene gave the question her serious consideration. She was one of those women who looked most ludicrous when most worried. "If you ask me," she said, "I believe that Mr. Franklin has given you away and told the truth."

This answer came as rather a shock to Beatrix, but only for a moment. "Well, I don't," she said. "Shall I tell you why?"

"Indeed I wish you would."

"If Franklin had given me away he wouldn't have kicked that cane chair."

Brownie gave another gesture of despair. "If only you had it in you to take things seriously."

"Seriously! You dear old thing, I'm most serious. I have every reason to be. But that was a fine piece of deduction and my spirits have gone up with a rush. I'm now going to find Franklin, and I'll bet you a diamond bracelet that he has stood by me like a Trojan and is as angry as a caged hawk. Now, the all-important point is this: What hat shall I wear,— a simple, naïve, garden thing, or this sophisticated effort? I must please his eye."

"Wear the smart hat," said Mrs. Keene.

Beatrix wore the other. That almost went without saying.

She sang on her way down-stairs. She chose Santuzza's song from *Cavalleria,* which she ragged in the most masterly manner. She did this to give the impression, to anyone who might hear her, of light-heartedness. Her lithe, young, white-clad figure was reflected by many mirrors as she passed. She made sure that none of her people were in the hall, and then darted out to the veranda to look for Franklin. The members of the house-party had dispersed to pass the morning away in tennis and with the rehearsals for the pastoral. She could see a number of people under the trees to the left. She swung round the veranda, walking on the balls of her feet like a young Diana, singing as she went, but darting quick, anxious glances to the right and left. There was no sign of Franklin. She was about to make her way through the Dutch garden, all aflame with flowers, to the summer-house which overlooked the Sound shining beneath the sun, when a footman came out carrying one of her mother's petulant spaniels.

"Do you happen to know where Mr. Franklin is?" she asked, pulling up short.

"Yes, madam."

The word made her heart pump. "Well,—where?"

"Mr. Franklin ordered his car round ten minutes ago, madam, and has driven off to New York."

New York! Then he *had* given her away, after all, and left her in the lurch. What on earth was she going to do now?

XI

It was twenty minutes to one when Franklin brought his car to a stop at the Willow Tree Club in West Fifty-seventh Street. Malcolm usually dropped in to this rendezvous of writing men, artists and good fellows generally to read the papers, about midday. There was more than a chance that he might be lunching there.

The city lay weltering under a pall of humidity. As about a great hive the people moved like tired bees. Flags lay comatose around their posts, striped awnings hung limply above the windows of those unhappy souls who could not get away, and the buildings which reared their heads up to the sky seemed to perspire.

Franklin enquired for his friend at the office, was told that he had been in but had left half an hour before, murmured a mere second-grade oath, and being a member of the club himself, went into the reading room. He remembered that he needed certain things from Spaldings', especially flies, and knowing from long experience that he had better not trust to his memory, decided to write a brief letter, then and there.

A pale man was sitting within easy reach of the long magazine table. He looked up with the slightly antagonistic expression characteristic of men in clubs who have had a room to themselves, and wondered

what sort of lucky creature the interloper was who could afford to achieve such a superb tan in a world of work and effort.

Franklin caught his eye, registered the fact that he had never seen him before and didn't much care if he never did again, and sat down at a writing table behind a book-case in the corner of the room.

After a few moments he was aware of the entrance of someone else because the pale man sang out a greeting, but he had concentrated on his list and what was said didn't reach him. He searched his brain for everything that he needed in the way of flies and tackle, endeavored to make his writing more legible than it usually was and was about to address the envelope when he caught the name of Vanderdyke. It was not so much the mention of the name that made him prick up his ears as the rather ribald tone in which it was said.

"I was surprised to read all that glorification in this morning's papers," he heard. "Gossip had it that *you* were very much in the running, York."

"I? Oh, no, my dear fellow. I had never entered in the matrimonial stakes for that girl."

"Why not? Beatrix Vanderdyke was worth winning, surely? Money to burn, beauty, youth,— what else do you want?"

"I'm not a marrying man. As they will be pretty certain to say in my obituary notices, I am 'wedded to my art.' Besides, my dear fellow, I have the fortunate knack of getting what I want without the consent of the parson." There was the kind of snigger that

only comes from men who belong to the lady-killer tribe.

That, and the gross innuendo that preceded it, carried Franklin to his feet. The lust to hit had seized him. He stalked round the book-case into the middle of the room. His hands were clenched and he was breathing deeply like a man who had been running. He recognized in the tall, red-tied, flamboyant person the man with whom he had seen Beatrix that night when he had left the apartment house with Malcolm Fraser.

"I was luckily in a position to overhear your remark," he said quietly. "I'm Franklin. Miss Van derdyke is my wife."

The pale man drew in his breath, and a look of excitement and pleasure flashed into his eyes. The one thing that made him feel that he had any blood was a fight.

Sutherland York recovered himself quickly. But for the slight suggestion of whiteness about his mouth he seemed to be perfectly at ease and nonchalant. "I'm glad that you're glad," he said, with a polite smile. "Permit me to offer my congratulations upon your very sudden and romantic marriage."

Franklin went a step or two nearer. "If you were not such a fat, unmuscular brute," he said, slowly, and with the most careful distinctness, "if I shouldn't be laying myself open to a charge of cruelty to animals, I'd thrash you until you blubbered for mercy." He put his hands in his pockets. "Even if I did, it would have very little effect, except to send you to the dentist

and the beauty doctor. Your sort of liar is never properly cured."

He waited for a moment, obviously to give the famous artist a chance to revenge himself in some way for the insult that he had deliberately made as strong as he could.

And the pale man eyed York expectantly, eagerly.

But York still smiled, although the whites of his eyes took on a strange yellow tinge. "I regret that I do not possess the gift," he said, with a little bow, "of making suitable tu quoque to cave-men."

Whereupon Franklin burst into a laugh, turned and went out.

The pale man flung his magazine away. He resented being done out of legitimate excitement.

"A curiously uncivilized person," said York, putting a shaky hand up to his vivid tie. "Come to lunch, my dear fellow."

"Thanks, no; I'm lunching at the Biltmore," said the pale man, shortly.

It was when the portrait painter found himself alone that the veneer fell from him like the silver paper from a cheap cigar. His face swelled and grew red. "Curse these two autocrats," he cried inwardly. "I owed her something. Now he's added to the debt. Married, are they? By God, we'll see about that. Scandal? Ah, that's where *I* come in."

Franklin drove home, and gave his goggles to the chauffeur.

"Keep the car here," he said. "I shall probably want her again. But come up and get something to eat."

It was something to drink that O'Connor wanted, but he showed his excellent teeth in appreciation of the thought and made things ship-shape.

The over-uniformed elevator man in the hall of the apartment-house, which couldn't have been more pompous and imposing if it had been that of an embassy or a moving-picture palace, gave an exclamation of surprise at the sight of Franklin. "Didn't expect to see *you* here, sir," he said, with that nice touch of deferential camaraderie that is characteristic of all elevator men in apartment houses where rents are so prohibitive that they can boast of a waiting list.

"I didn't expect to *be* here," said Franklin.

"No, I s'pose not. Well, is this hot enough for you, sir?"

"I don't mind it. Do you know if Mr. Fraser is in?"

"Mr. Fraser? Yes, sir. I took him up awhile ago. He went out early."

Franklin nodded, got out and rang the bell. He had forgotten his latch-key as usual. The elevator man stood hesitating for a moment. His smile was so beaming that instinctively Franklin knew that if his door wasn't opened quickly he would be obliged to reply to very much undesired congratulations. The thing was all over the earth by that time, of course. The door opened at the psychological moment, however, and Franklin was spared. All the same, he turned before he went in, gave the man a nod, said, "Thanks, all the same," and exchanged a very human smile. Good fellows, both.

The man who opened the door was unable to refrain from raising his well-trained eyebrows, and his lips, too, shaped themselves for felicitations. But Franklin gave him his hat and said: "Tell Mrs. Romanes that I shall want lunch." And then let out a loud and ringing shout of "Who's aboard?"

Malcolm Fraser, who was sitting under an electric fan in a suit of white duck, sprang to his feet. "Good Lord!" he said to himself, "what the ——"

Franklin turned at the door. "And, Johnson," he called out, "bring me a claret and seltzer! Sharp's the word." He glanced at the evening paper in Fraser's hand and gave a snort. There it was. Oh, Lord, yes! In huge letters half-way down the front page. Far bigger than would have been given to an ordinary war, or the discovery of a genuine cure for consumption. Photographs of bride and bridegroom, too, of course, twined together with flourishing lines and love-knots and orange blossoms.

Fraser shaped his lips.

"Now, look here, Malcolm," said Franklin, grimly, "if you say it,— one word of it,— I'll heave this chair at your head. All the same, I'm darned glad you're in, old man. I never needed your level head so much on earth."

An anxious look came into Fraser's blue and palpably incorruptible eyes. "Why? There's nothing wrong, is there?" he asked.

"Nothing wrong!"

But Johnson, who had dropped his usual heavy dignity in the excitement of the moment and really moved,

came in with the claret and seltzer and Franklin cut his remark short, took the refreshing-looking drink and gave the glass back.

With his scrupulously clean-shaven and almost clerical face wreathed in smiles, Johnson spoke: "Will you allow me, sir, to offer you ——"

Franklin jumped in quickly. "Yes, thank you, Johnson. Very much obliged. Leave the tray here."

"Very good, sir." Johnson was hurt. He had framed what he considered to be a fine flowing sentence. It seemed a pity that he should not have been permitted to give it full utterance. On his way to the door he resumed his usual iciness.

Franklin put two chairs close to the window. "Sit down, old man," he said, "and listen to this."

XII

Beatrix had courage. Instead of shutting herself up in her suite of rooms and hiding behind the excuse of a headache until her family disclosed to her the present condition of affairs, she took her place in the rehearsals for the pastoral, was highly entertained by the airs of the matinée idol, and presently met her mother and father and Aunt Honoria at luncheon, with her head as high as ever and laughter dancing in her eyes.

Imagine her relief when she found her mother cordial, her father affectionate and Aunt Honoria peculiarly gracious. Obviously Franklin had not given her away. She was still the heroine of this family drama. Up went her spirits. Optimism came back like the sun after a storm, and living once more for the moment and leaving the immediate future on the knees of the gods she became the life and soul of the house-party, teasing the matinée idol, complimenting the producer, saying little deferential things to her aunt, and playing the game of badinage with the guests with all the finish and daring of a champion.

Reaction set in early in the afternoon. She was tired. The strain of living over a mine began to tell. Mrs. Lester Keene's continual questions as to where Franklin was and why he had gone to town got on her

nerves. And so, leaving Brownie on the veranda as a spy, she went to her rooms, gave orders that she was not to be disturbed and composed herself to sleep like a crown princess of a fictitious kingdom.

It was a little after four o'clock when Mrs. Keene fluttered in, in a high state of excitement. She found Beatrix half-awake and half-asleep lying on her pompous bed in the most charming dishabille, with a little flush on her lovely face like the pink of apple blossoms.

"My dear, my dear!" said Mrs. Keene, bending over her. "Mr. Franklin has just come back."

"Who has just come back, Brownie?"

"Mr. Franklin,— who else?" Sometimes this patient woman held that she had every right to show a touch of exasperation.

"Oh, yes,— Franklin, the sportsman," said Beatrix. "Heigh-ho! I've been dreaming of dancing. I invented a new fox-trot and I danced it with Maurice for an hour. The band was perfect."

"Mr. Franklin glared at me and went up to his room. I didn't like the expression on his face at all. Do please get up, dear. Now, please do!"

Beatrix heaved a sigh, sat up, remained thinking for several moments with her hands clasped about her knees, and then sprang out of bed. "Action!" she said. "Action! Call Helene, please, Brownie. I'm seized with an insatiable curiosity to find out what's happened. Really and truly, if I had consulted a specialist in the art of providing amusement for blasé people he couldn't possibly have devised a more won-

derful scheme than mine for making life worth living. Now, Helene, pull yourself together. Brownie dear, ring down for a cup of tea. All hands clear for action!"

They did so to such good purpose,— Mrs. Keene bustling herself into a state of hysterical agitation, and Helene into breathlessness,— that barely half-an-hour later Beatrix, in a new and delicious frock, sailed downstairs, was told that Mr. Franklin had gone to the summer-house and followed him, humming a little tune. She came upon him standing with his hands thrust deep into his pockets and his eyes on the horizon.

"I knew I should find you here," she said, in a ringing voice. "Good afternoon! How d'you do?"

Franklin turned and looked at her, and as he did so Malcolm Fraser's outburst came back into his mind. What a charming child she must have been before the spoiling process had had time to take its full effect! What a high-spirited, insolent, beautiful, untamed thing she was now with the world at her feet. "Good afternoon!" he answered, with a curious quickening of his pulse.

"Don't you love the view here? It's wonderful. I always come and drink it in when I feel the need of being soothed."

"That's why you've come now, I suppose," said Franklin, drily.

"No. I'm utterly unruffled and at peace with the world."

"May I say 'I don't believe you' without hurting your feelings?"

"Surely," said Beatrix. "Say anything you like. It's a free country,— a little too free perhaps." She bent down and picked a rose-bud and put it to her lips.

"Very good. Then I'll add this at once. I haven't wasted time since I saw you last."

"Oh, how pleasant to think that I've had a good effect upon you," she said, with a mischievous smile. "You have the reputation of being a past-master in the art of wasting time."

Franklin ignored the remark, although he noticed that she had two of the most ravishing dimples he had ever seen. "You may not know it, but this morning I went through a pretty bad hour with your people. I didn't actually lie to them, but I managed with a great effort not to tell them anything that was true."

"Then I win my bet," said Beatrix.

"I don't know what you mean."

"It doesn't matter. Tell me more. You interest me."

"That's good," said Franklin, with a sort of laugh. "After that,— and I dare say this is also news to you,— I drove to town to get advice. The end of it all is that there's only one way in which you and I can bring this farce to an end."

"No, no!" cried Beatrix, with mock horror at the word, "not farce,— comedy, please."

Franklin would have given nearly all he possessed for the pleasure of spanking that young woman until she cried for mercy. As it was, he pitched away his cigarette, waited until the echo of her voice had died

away, and faced her up. "Now listen!" he said, sharply, "and if you are capable of it give some consideration to me and my life and to the gravity of my position and yours."

Beatrix waved her hand.

"We've got to go off at once," said Franklin, giving each word its full importance,—"somewhere or other, I don't know where,—and get married."

Beatrix almost jumped out of her skin.

Franklin went on quickly. "For this reason: I saw Sutherland York this morning at the club. It was perfectly obvious that he intends to make you pay fully for something that you did to him. From his manner and his infernal cheek I gathered that he has seen through the whole of this business, and he's going to spread it about that this is a bluff. He knows how to do this sort of thing better than most men, I judge, and it won't be many days before we find scandal rearing its head at us. Therefore, we must become at once what you said we were,—married. I'm sorry, but there's no way out. That over, you will go your way and I mine, and from the moment that we separate I will proceed to do that disgusting thing which the laws make necessary for a man who wishes to be divorced from his wife. You will please be good enough to make your plans to leave here not later than to-morrow. Some other girl must take your part in the pastoral."

"Impossible," said Beatrix, quietly.

"Why?"

"Simply because it is. I'm going to play that part

and I'm going to look very nice in the clothes. Also, I'm looking forward to a great deal of fun with the matinée idol, shaved or unshaved."

Franklin whipped round upon her. "It isn't for you to say what you'll do or not do. For your sake, as well as for mine, I must take charge of this business, and you'll please carry out my orders."

"Orders!" She threw up her head. "That's a word that isn't and never will be contained in my dictionary."

"You're wrong. I've just added it to that volume," he said.

Beatrix gave a big laugh and stood up to him with her chin tilted, her eyes dancing and a look of triumph all over her lovely face. "Take charge — you!" she cried. "Think again. The whip is in my hand now, and I shall use it. You dare not give me away. You're afraid of the laughter that will follow you wherever you go. I think you're right. But,— as to being your wife, not in this world, my good sir, for any reason that you can name. I'd rather die."

And then she turned on her heel and swung away, with the roses seeming to bend towards her as she went.

Franklin watched her, with his hands clenched and his mouth set. "By God," he said to himself, "we'll see about that!" And he would have added more angry words, thickly, to his mental outburst, if a new feeling,— bewildering, painful, intoxicating,— had not welled up to his heart. All round him, as he stood there in amazement, the air seemed to be filled with

"It won't be many days before we find scandal rearing its head at us." *Page 135.*

the song of birds. Then it came to him,— the answer to the question he had put to himself impatiently and jealously in his apartment in New York after Malcolm Fraser's little story. "I'm going to begin to live — I've met the woman who can make me give up freedom and peace of mind, take me to Heaven or draw me down into Hell!"

XIII

That rather charming haphazard air that is characteristic of afternoon tea in an English country house, to which young people from the tennis courts and golf links slack in just as they are and find the hostess presiding at a substantial table, assisted by all the younger men who are born to carry cups and cake — they always dance and generally play the piano — was missing from the West Terrace of the Vanderdyke mansion. Mrs. Vanderdyke "dressed" for tea. Her costume was a very beautiful and pompous affair, not cut low enough for dinner or for breakfast but quite low enough for the theatre, and she wore a considerable quantity of jewels. Brilliantly made up, she sat under the awning with her back to the sun chatting with royal condescension and studied charm. It was one of the best things that she did. It was also her first public appearance of the day, most of which had been devoted to a hard, stern and successful fight against Anno Domini.

She was surrounded by members of the house party who took themselves and her seriously and she, and they, were under the expert attention of several footmen. Carefully chosen for their height and gravity and truth to type, these men wore a very distinguished livery with knee breeches and black silk stockings,

and they hovered from person to person with a rather soothing quietude, moved by invisible machinery.

The vivacious little Mrs. Edgar Lee Reeves who talked continuously of "my daughter Lady Bramshaw and that sweet old place in Hampshire" was purring under the attentions of Admiral De Forrest Wontner. Although a grandmother, an event of which she spoke as if it were rather a malicious lie, Mrs. Reeves looked like a very young, blond, motion picture star who tames cave-men and broncho-busters with just one quick upward glance. Her laughter bubbled like boiling water and at odd moments she clapped her hands and opened her blue eyes very wide and pursed up her little red mouth. Of her tiny ankles she was very proud and hardly ever forgot to expose them. She underlined most of her words with gushing emphasis and everything, from a sunset to a new soap, was "*perfectly wonderful.*" Wontner and she had been engaged to be married after a dance at Annapolis somewhere in the seventies, but while he was at sea on his first commission, Ettie Stanton met, danced and ran away with young E. L. Reeves of Baltimore and remained "terribly crazy" about him to the day of his death. It was indeed a peculiarly happy marriage, blessed with three fine manly boys and a girl who was always being mistaken for her mother. And now the retired sea-dog, celebrated for his early Victorian gallantry, one of the few remaining bucks in the country and a man of wit, chivalry and golden heart, carried on a St. Martin's summer flirtation with his former sweetheart,

the very sight of whom dispelled his accumulation of years as the sun scatters the dew. Most people were amused at the affair and several were sympathetic.

Talking to Mrs. Vanderdyke, or rather listening to Mrs. Vanderdyke, who either talked or went into a trance, was handsome Percy Campbell, the man who drank a bottle of whiskey before breakfast and played golf all day in order to drink another before going to bed. He owned three streets in New York; he had never done anything more serious than learn to play the violin, about which he talked to everybody. He was now dangerously near fifty-three but since passing out of Harvard he had not found time to practise more than a dozen times. He carried three beautiful Strads wherever he went, however, and whenever he became genuinely fuddled motored to the nearest town, day or night, to buy a new stack of strings and rosin. His wife went with him as well as his violins and received much less consideration although many more cases. They were popular people and Campbell's shooting box in Scotland near Cupar, Fife, from which his remote ancestors strayed, was always full. No altogether Scot could compete with him in his devotion to the national beverage.

Then there were Mrs. Lucas D. Osterpath, in mourning for her son who had just married a Folly from the New Amsterdam Theatre roof; the William Bannermans, recently remarried after a most amusing divorce; Philip Kawbro in his inevitable blue and white striped collar and yellow waistcoat; Regina Westerhaus, as regal as her name, but still a spinster

at the end of three seasons, and the Hon. Mrs. Claude Larpent, the centre of attraction for those three vieux marcheurs, Major Thresher, Roger Peek and Courtney Borner.

The young people avoided this function and got whatever refreshment they needed from the bachelors' house.

It was to this terrace that Beatrix made her way after flinging her triumphant refusal at Franklin. All the elation of a victor ran through her veins. What did she care about the possibility either of being blackmailed or shown up by Sutherland York? Why should she give the smallest consideration to Pelham Franklin or join him in any plan to save his name from scandal? He had said an unforgivable thing to her in her bedroom that memorable night, the sting of which still made her smart. She gloried in having been able to make him pay something on account of that huge debt and with characteristic high-handedness turned a Nelsonian eye to the black cloud that was moving up over the horizon. She had always taken chances. It was part and parcel of her nature. With a growing sense of exhilaration and the feeling that she was merely at the beginning of a great adventure she took a chance again. If the storm was fated to burst and Franklin gave her away to her parents, well, let it burst. There would be an epoch-making family row, and unless her wits protected her again she would be sent into the back of beyond. That was an appalling prospect which, however, she pushed aside. She trusted to her usual luck to carry

her out of this tangle, if only by the skin of her teeth. The great point at the moment was that she had scored over Franklin and left him impotent. But for that parting remark of his before he left her room she might have considered the possibility of falling in with his plan. The humiliation of being made to obey his orders might have been lived down, greatly as she resented humiliation. But when it came to such a deliberate attack upon her vanity — that was altogether different.

Miss Honoria Vanderdyke, who had been hard at work with a secretary all the afternoon organizing a new society to look after women released from penitentiaries, came out as Beatrix was passing. The graceful, white-haired woman put her arm round the girl's shoulders. "I've never seen you look so happy, dear child," she said, with an unusual touch of tenderness.

Beatrix smiled at her and in her mind's eye saw Franklin's expression as he stood outside the summer-house with her refusal in his face. "I have every reason to be happy, Aunt Honoria," she answered, in a ringing voice. "Life has great compensations."

They fell into step on their way to tea — the elder woman a little envious of what appeared to be her niece's romantic love affair, because her own had ended tragically and left her with a broken heart. Must a woman necessarily break her heart before she will devote her life to the relief of other people's sufferings? An old philosopher, who must have been something of a misogynist, once defined woman's happiness

" as that state in which all their immediate desires were gratified, a self-satisfaction which left them blind to the fact that other people littered the earth." Maybe he was right.

Aunt Honoria looked rather searchingly at the beautiful girl at her side who, alone among all the human beings that she knew, possessed the magic carpet. " Why do you talk of compensations? " she asked. " At your age, in your position? You puzzle me, child."

Beatrix laughed the question off. " Oh, that's a long story. One of these fine days, when I am overmastered by a desire to confess, I'll tell you all about it. Look, isn't mother wonderful? It's almost absurd for me to call her by anything but her Christian name."

Aunt Honoria smiled a little dryly. " My dear," she said, " all women could be as unnaturally young as your mother is if they gave up as much time to it. Tell me about that very striking person who is completely hemmed in by old men."

" Mrs. Larpent? Isn't she attractive? Isn't she exactly like one's idea of a favorite in the Court of Louis Quinze? I don't know anything about her yet. Wait until to-night and I will give you my impressions." She kissed her hand to her aunt, touched her arm with an affectionate and respectful finger and crossed the terrace to Ida Larpent's chair. " May I join your admirers? " she asked.

With a curious smile Mrs. Larpent drew closer the chair out of which Courtney Borner had done his best to spring. " I should like nothing so much," she said.

It might be most useful to become the friend of the wife of the man who had stirred her calculating heart to love. Who could tell?

In the meantime having immediately gained Mrs. Vanderdyke's permission to ask a friend of his to dine and sleep, Franklin shut himself up in the telephone room, asked for the number of his apartment in New York and told Johnson to call Malcolm Fraser.

"Old man," he said, when his friend's voice came rather anxiously over the wire, "will you do something for me? Will you get a car at once and pack your things for dinner and sleeping and rattle down here as quick as you can? I can't say anything now except that I need you worse than ever. . . . Thanks. I knew you would. So long."

In a secret corner of his staunch heart Fraser had locked up his love for Beatrix. He was now to be consulted again as to how to put things right between her and his best pal. It's a queer world and full of paradox.

XIV

A FEW minutes later Franklin was exuberantly welcomed to tea by little Mrs. Edgar Lee Reeves. "I'm *terribly* glad to see you," she cried. "Come and tell me *all* about *everything*. I was *distracted* when I heard that you had gone to town. Admiral, have you *ever* seen such an *intriguing* tie as the boy's wearing?"

Poor little comic lady! She had much the same effect on Franklin as that diabolical machine that drills holes in steel girders. He sat down at her side and made ready to endure the continual tapping of her uncontrollable tongue because he could see Beatrix with the sun on her hair and the nape of her neck. He didn't quite know why, but he was queerly disconcerted and annoyed to see that she was in animated conversation with Ida Larpent and the fact that he received an enigmatical glance through the latter lady's half-closed eyes did much to add to this uncomfortable feeling.

"I've been talking to Mrs. Vanderdyke about your unconventional behavior, Mr. Franklin," continued Mrs. Reeves.

"Unconventional," echoed Franklin, listening with half an ear. "In what way?"

"Well, isn't it the usual thing for two young people to enjoy a honeymoon after they are married, especially *such* young people?"

The word honeymoon came strangely to Franklin,

If it had been mentioned the day before in connection with this extraordinary business it would have caused him to scoff inwardly and do his best to pass it over with a forced smile. As it was, on top of his sudden realization that in Beatrix was the woman who called him to live bigly and love to distraction, but who had refused with utter scorn even to go through the form of marriage with him, it acted like the sting of a knife.

But the word also gave him an idea and Mrs. Reeves' remark about having spoken to Mrs. Vanderdyke a new plan. For some little time he remained where he sat while the little woman babbled, going from subject to subject in her characteristically unconcentrated way. He nodded where he thought that a nod was due, smiled frequently and threw in a yes or no as it seemed necessary. Finally he got up, when the Admiral drew his old sweetheart's attention once more to himself, and went over to Aunt Honoria.

"May I take you for a little exercise in the garden?" he asked.

"With great pleasure," she said, rising at once. "I have been trying to catch your eye for some minutes. I want your advice."

As they passed Beatrix she had the audacity to throw at Franklin a most connubial smile. It gave the elderly lady a thrill and very nearly threw Franklin off his feet. He heard the contralto of Mrs. Larpent's voice and Beatrix's ringing reply: "Yes, he's a darling." Ye gods, but this girl must surely be a surprise to Nature herself.

Miss Vanderdyke refrained from saying a word

until she was out of earshot of the cheerful group. Then she drew up at the top of the Italian steps that led into the geometrical gardens. "I want you to listen to this extraordinary epistle, Pelham," she said. "It was sent to my sister-in-law before she left her rooms this afternoon." She drew it out of its envelope and read it in her clear, incisive voice.

"Dear Mrs. Vanderdyke,

"I have just received a telegram from a leading motion picture concern in Los Angeles offering me very big money to leave to-night to do a picture for them. Business before pleasure, you know, so I have just time before making a train to New York to write these few lines. I am sorry for the pastoral, but doubtless you will be able to find a substitute for me, though not, I fear, with an equal sense of rommance. Thanking you for your kindness and asuring you that I shall not require any fee for rehearsals.

"Sinceerely,

"Brian Young."

"Good Lord!" said Franklin. "Pretty cool piece of impertinence."

"I thought so. And look, he spells romance with two 'm's,' and assuring with one 's.' He also makes the inappropriate word, sincerely, look even quainter by a superfluous 'e' in the middle. Are all matinée idols quite so illiterate, I wonder?"

"Hardly," said Franklin. "What's to be done?"

Aunt Honoria shrugged her shoulders. "Your mother-in-law and I, after consultation with my

brother, who showed even less than his usual interest in the matter, have decided to cancel the pastoral, especially as we have all been discussing the advisability of your taking Beatrix away."

"For a honeymoon?" asked Franklin involuntarily.

"Exactly," Aunt Honoria gave a little laugh. "Because you two young despots have broken the conventions by this secret marriage, I think it follows that you should do something to stop gossip and comment by conforming to an old custom. What do you say, my friend?"

Franklin put a curb upon his eagerness. To get Beatrix to sea on his yacht — that was the thing. It would give him a chance, just a chance, to win his way to Beatrix's untouched and wilful heart, and go far to show York that his intuition and cunning reasoning were wrong.

"If you think so," he said, "I am perfectly willing to fall in with your wishes."

"That's extremely nice of you!"

Franklin showed his excellent teeth and gave a little bow. But not being a lady's man he failed to produce an Elizabethan compliment or one that might have proved that there is gallantry even in these careless days.

Aunt Honoria took the word for the deed, and Franklin's arm down the steps. The sun was dipping into the Sound and the whole panorama of sky was striped and splashed with red. Young voices drifted toward them from the tennis courts and a flock of wild ducks high up in a wide V flew rapidly above their

heads. The scent of flowers rose up to them as they walked and a very golden day slipped gently into evening.

"I don't know what Beatrix will have to say about it," said Franklin.

There was a rather dry laugh. "Oh, I had not forgotten that Beatrix, although happily married, is a factor to be consulted."

Franklin laughed too. "No," he said, with several memories very clear in his mind, "one could hardly forget that."

And then the tall, white-haired, dignified woman, about whom there was an intellectual humanity very rarely met with, did an unexpected thing. She stopped suddenly and stood in front of Franklin, eye to eye with him. "My dear Pelham," she said, with a touch of propheticism, "you will not find the woman in Beatrix, nor will she have discovered the woman in herself, until that precious moment when, quite conscious of her abdication of a mock throne, she falls in with your wishes like a simple trusting child. When that moment comes, if ever it does, I shall give praise to God, because the woman in Beatrix will be very sweet and beautiful."

And then they continued on their way through the sleepy gardens.

"So shall I," said Franklin quietly.

"The fact that the pastoral will not be given will help us considerably. Beatrix, who, by the way, has taken small part in the rehearsals, will turn for amusement to something else. Her father and mother both

desire that she shall put an end to gossip and give our good friends no further excuse to hold her up as the most unconventional girl of the day. That sort of reputation so rightly belongs to young women of the stage whose success depends far more on advertisement than talent. Where is your yacht?"

"Lying in the river, fully commissioned."

"Oh, well, then everything is easy! Surely nothing could be more delightful for Beatrix than to make a cruise under these romantic circumstances. Leave it all to me, my dear boy. I'll see that you get your wife to yourself, never fear."

Beatrix ran her arm round Aunt Honoria's waist. "Well," she said, with the smile that she always used when it was urgently necessary to win a heart, "am I to be allowed in this conference, or am I a back number in the family now?" She had watched this intimate talk between Miss Vanderdyke and Franklin with growing uneasiness. Finally, in the middle of one of Ida Larpent's best stories, she had sprung up, made short work of the distance between herself and them and broken into the conversation.

"We were talking about *you,* my dear," said Aunt Honoria.

"No!" cried Beatrix. "Impossible!"

Franklin caught her mocking glance and dug his heels into the path.

"We were making plans for you, charming plans, honeymoon plans as a matter of fact, and as the pastoral is cancelled you will no doubt fall in with them with enthusiasm."

"The pastoral cancelled? Why?" The girl's voice was incredulous. "But I've been to all the trouble of getting a special costume, nearly all the younger people in the house-party have been chosen on purpose."

"Our friend the matinée idol has flown away to pick up a bigger seed elsewhere."

A flush of anger colored Beatrix's face and her eyes glinted. "He said something to me this morning about motion pictures. I thought he was endeavoring to advertise himself. I never dreamed he would have the impertinence to chuck *us!*"

"Well, his withdrawal simplified things, my dear, as I will tell you later. Come to my room ten minutes before dinner and I will give you the latest family plan. In the meantime, two's company, and I will get a few words with my old friend, the Admiral, who is wandering about like a lost soul." Aunt Honoria nodded and with her shoulders as square as those of a well-drilled man, went gracefully to where the septuagenarian lover was either chewing the cud of bitter reflection or recovering from a long bout of exaggerated and overemphasized commonplaces.

And then Beatrix turned sharply to Franklin. "Be good enough to tell me what all this means," she said.

Franklin showed his teeth in his peculiar silent laugh. "Why put a pin through Miss Vanderdyke's little surprise?"

Beatrix intended to know. Her curiosity was alight. It was so obvious that she had been under discussion and as the family was to be dragged in, so

certain that she was going to be coerced into something totally against her wishes. But she changed her tactics.

"Oh, look," she cried, "isn't that sail perfectly charming against the sky?"

"Corking," said Franklin, not looking at it, but at her. By Jupiter, how lovely, how desirable, but how amazingly perverse she was! A man would have not lived for nothing who could break her and make her, even if she never returned his love.

"It's a good world," she said, with a little sigh, waiting to catch Franklin on the hop. "Sometimes I'm consumed with a longing to be right away in the middle of the sea — to get even with things."

She caught him. It was uncanny. "The chance is yours," he said, easily beaten. "It has been decided that we go for our honeymoon on the *Galatea*."

She whipped around. "Oh, so that's it, is it? You've been working up a conspiracy to get me on your yacht so that you may escape from gossip? I see! Quite clever to enrol my family against me, but my answer to you this afternoon holds good."

For all the love that had come upon him so suddenly, Franklin lost patience. He put his hand on her arm and held her in a close grip. "Let it hold good," he said. "Stand out against being my wife until you see sense and learn that others deserve consideration besides yourself. But conform now to your people's wishes and put York off the scent. That's all you're required to do at the moment."

"Take your hand away," said Beatrix icily. "This

is not a woman's bedroom. I can call for help here, remember."

Franklin retained his grip. He was very angry. "You fool," he said, too completely out of control to choose his words. "Look at this thing sanely. Come out of your house of cards and play the game like a grown woman. The scandal that drove you into taking advantage of me will be ten thousand times worse if York gets to work."

"That doesn't worry me," said Beatrix calmly. "I'll thank you for my arm."

"You don't count," said Franklin. "Consideration must be given to your people and to me."

"I'm perfectly willing and even anxious to protect my people, but"— and she gave him two fearless eyes —"I see no reason why I should worry about you."

"Why not? Where would you be now but for my having come to the rescue?"

Beatrix gave a most tantalizing laugh. "When you learned to play the trumpet you were a good pupil, Mr. Franklin. Any other man would have done as well, you know."

Franklin dropped her arm. "Good God," he said, "you beat me. I can't compete with you. I might just as well try to drive sense into a lunatic."

It was good, it was worth being alive to Beatrix to see this man, this fine, strong, clean-built, square-shouldered man, who had dared to conceive the remote possibility of humbling her for what she had done, who had had the sublime audacity to believe that he could teach her a lesson, standing impotent before her, self-

confessedly her inferior, when it came to wits. She showed it in her smile, in her almost bland and child-like glee, in her frank pleasure. He had said a thing to her that no man should ever have said to a woman and expect to be forgiven. She would remember it as long as she lived and make him pay for it and pay and pay again.

"Even lunatics have their sane moments," she said. "Mine come whenever I think about you. Isn't that Malcolm Fraser on the terrace? How delightful. Suppose we go back now, after yet another of our little wrangles, shall we?"

She stood silhouetted against the darkening sky, with her hands behind her back, her head held high, the very epitome of utter carelessness, the last word in individualism, the thoughtless and selfish enjoyment of the moment and of life generally so long as it was without responsibility, concentration, or a call to do anything for anybody but herself.

"Count me out, please," said Franklin. "You must get out of this business in your own way. I shall leave here to-night and go to sea. I wish you luck."

He bowed, turned on his heel and walked away, and as he went, he hoped that he might never see that girl again.

XV

"Now, old man," said Franklin when at last he found himself with Malcolm Fraser, "let's get out of earshot of this chattering crowd and come up to things."

"The sooner the better," said Fraser.

They left the hall and passed the ball-room, to which everyone with a sense of rhythm, even if with no ear for music, had been drawn by the irresistible syncopation of a large banjo band of colored musicians. The drummer was already committing demented acts upon a scavenger collection of tins, boxes, and whistles. They went out into the moonlight and through the gardens to the summer house.

The dynamic energy which radiated from Franklin did much, so far as Fraser was concerned, to spoil the exquisite peace and lassitude of the night. All the poet in him gave him the keys with which to open some of the unnoticed doors to Nature's storehouses of beauty and called him to stand very still and fill his brain and soul with the sight that met his eyes. He had never felt prouder of his country than when he revelled in the picture of the moon-touched Sound, magic with the reflection of a multitude of stars, and ran his eyes along the dim outline of shore to his right and caught the bright eyes of thousands of cheerful lights. It seemed

to him that Nature, with the proud consciousness of her genius as an artist, had outdone herself in setting a scene for the human comedy in which he had been cast for the second male part. Water and moon and stars, the mystery of night, the feeling of illimitable space, the scent of sleeping flowers, the whisper of fairies, all as old and even older than the hills — surely this was an appropriate setting for the working out of the ancient and inevitable drama, the ever-recurring clash, between a man and a woman.

"Go ahead, Pel," he said. "This morning in New York you left this strange story of yours at the point where the entrance of York into it made you decide to marry Beatrix. I have not got the novelist's brain so I can't for the life of me see what can have happened in the chapter that has been begun since then."

"My dear chap," said Franklin, flinging the end of a cigarette over the wall, "don't you know that more impossible things are done every hour in life than ever find their way into books?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, the thing that I should have thought the very limit of impossibility happened here, on this very spot, this afternoon when I got back. Take a guess."

Fraser's answer came quickly. "Beatrix loves you."

There was no mirth in Franklin's laugh. "Guess again."

"You love Beatrix."

"A precious clever fellow, aren't you? What the devil made you get to love so quickly? I expected you

to flounder through a dozen guesses and then be wide of the mark."

"A man and a woman and love," said Fraser. "Why hire a detective to make a mystery of that? It's any poet's job."

Franklin kicked the wall viciously. "There's nothing for a poet in this," he said. "I do love this girl. I wish to God I didn't. I'd give ten years of my life if she left me as cold as a flapping fish. You know what we talked over this morning. We decided that there was only one way for me to get out honestly of that fool maze in which I'd been caught. The reasons were pretty obvious. My family and the Vanderdykes were at the mercy of that glossy charlatan and because of the ungovernable impulses of this . . . this — what in thunder *is* the right word for Beatrix? I give it up."

"Undiscovered girl. Will that do?"

"No," said Franklin. "Not a bit like it."

"Well, then, dollar-ruined, misnamed victim of a false civilization. How's that?"

"Too long and too pedantic. I wanted one word. However, let it go. What's it matter? It's a waste of words to describe her and a waste of time to consider her. When I put things to her plainly and bluntly, she told me to go to the devil. I sent for you to use your influence, hoping, as of course you can see, that she might come down to solid things and see sense, — hoping too that, married, I might be able to force my way into her heart, if she's got one."

"Oh, yes, she's got one."

"I doubt it. Very highly finished watch works is all the heart she's got. However, since that first talk we've had another and that's made your kindness in coming here utterly useless."

Fraser turned eagerly towards his friend. He had no hope of ever being any more to Beatrix than an art student can be to a very perfect Gainsborough at which he gazes from behind a rail. He could neither buy her nor win her. She was completely out of his reach. Not able to marry her himself, he would rather see her married to Franklin than any living man. "Why?" he asked.

"Because I'm off. I'm out. I'm through. I'm not an expert in love. As a matter of fact I'm a boob in the business. It's new to me. But it's hit me good and hard, old son, and with any encouragement or with half a chance, I'd go for it with everything decent that's in me."

"Go for it," said Fraser, with an odd thrill in his voice. "You have all the luck."

Franklin shook his head. "No. I've done. She has no use for me. She mocks me, twists me round her finger, holds me up by the scruff of the neck, gets more fun out of me than if I were a red-nosed comedian and nearly drives me to murder. I just *have* to get away. I'm going to-night."

"To-night? But my dear old Pel, you — you only found out that you loved her a few hours ago."

"Quite long enough."

"But, good Lord, you *must* let me see what I can do. When we were kids I used to have some influence

with her. That is, once or twice she did things for my sake. To chuck the whole thing now, when it looks far more serious than ever,— why Pel, my dear man, talk about ungovernable impulses ——"

"Oh, I know," growled Franklin. "We're both tarred with the same brush. We're both money-maniacs. However, in perfectly cold blood, standing here to-night, I assure you that I am better out of her way. I can't help her. She won't be helped. She doesn't give a red cent for anything that may happen. All she cares about is just to go laughing through the moment. Well, let her. But she'll have to go alone. I love her in the sort of way that makes me want to choke her when she starts her tricks. That's the truth. I'm sorry. I don't want to be unsporting and all that but, Malcolm, she isn't safe with me." His voice shook as he said this thing.

"Wait until the morning," said Fraser urgently. "Let me show her the mess she's in."

"Can't be done," said Franklin. "I've told Albert to put my things in the car and I'm off to town right away. I shall go aboard in the morning and weigh anchor at two o'clock. I'll wait for you till then and not a second later." He laid his hand on Fraser's shoulder. "Get your things and come now. There's nothing to do here, worse luck."

"In any case," said Fraser, "I want to have a bit of a talk with Beatrix now that I'm here."

"All right. Well, then, so long, Malcolm. It was mighty good of you to come. Don't fail to be in time

to-morrow." He turned and went, walking quickly and waking all the flowers with his energy.

Fraser watched him go,— his tall, wiry, square-shouldered, muscular figure thrown out against the moon-silvered stone-work of the terrace. Then he turned back to the scene that filled his brain with imagery and that inarticulate worship which is offered by all good students to the Master for the perfection of His work. The silence sang. Many of the shore lights had gone out. But the moon rode high and the stars were at their brightest. The faint breeze had fallen away. Fraser raised his hand above his head in a sort of salute and then wheeled round and followed Franklin toward the elephantine house that made a huge black patch against the transparent sky. As he got nearer to it the music of a Hula-Hula thing came to him,— a fascinating, hip-moving mixture that suggested both Hawaii and Broadway and he could see the dancers flitting past the open windows of the ball-room. Among them was Beatrix, in the arms of one of those spineless semi-professional dancing men, a new, curious and uncomfortable breed that has developed in New York since the craze carried it on to its feet. Her mouth was open and her teeth gleaming and her young body moving with exquisite grace and ease.

Fraser went up to one of the windows and watched her until the tune came to an end. Every man has a dream. Somewhere or other in the life of men, all men, there is one precious, priceless thing tucked away in the secret drawer of the heart. Beatrix, as a little, frank, fearless girl, lived and was glorified, for Fraser.

He allowed himself just one short sigh. "And now," he said to himself, "to show for the first time in history that a poet can be a man of action for the sake of a friend. If I fail, I'll, yes, I'll eat and drink my self-filling pen."

It was one o'clock the next day when Franklin left the chart-room of the *Galatea,* where he had been planning out a cruise with the skipper. He went on deck. All hands had been busily at work since early morning, cleaning and polishing. The yacht looked like a beautiful woman, fresh from the hands of manicure and maid.

There was a shout of "Galatea ahoy" from the port side. Franklin took no notice. It was probably the arrival of the last boat-load of stores. He stood with his arms behind him and his mind back in the Vanderdyke gardens with the afternoon sun aslant upon them, and as he watched the retreating figure of the imperious girl to whom he was less than the dust, a mere pawn to be moved when it was necessary in her game, the amazing thrill which had discovered to him the love that was to be the greatest thing in his life, ran all over him again, and shook him with its strength and passion.

Well, he was bolting from her, bolting because he was afraid. It was the act of a coward, perhaps, but that girl had the power of making queer creatures of men. And he did not intend to be one of them. That was all.

A laugh, taken up by the breeze and thrown past his

ear like the petal of a flower, turned him round. Unable to believe his eyes, he saw Beatrix, Ida Larpent and Malcolm Fraser, standing on deck, while luggage was being piled about them. Fraser waved his hand triumphantly. Mrs. Larpent gave one of her slow smiles and Beatrix, with the expression of an angel and a touch of timidity and even humbleness that Franklin had never seen before, came forward. "Come aboard, sir," she said, with a very proper salute. "Malcolm showed me the error of my ways last night and like a good and faithful wife I am going on my honeymoon."

And then the old Beatrix returned and a mocking smile turned Franklin's heart to ice.

XVI

FRANKLIN was a man who inherited a horror of scenes. If he saw a crowd in the street reinforced by running figures he turned on his heel and went the other way. Anything in the nature of an argument sent him out into the street. He was at any time perfectly willing to fight, either for the sake of the exercise or to punish an offender, but he shied at a fracas, a domestic wrangle or the remote possibility of placing himself in a position of being surrounded by many people all talking at the same time. He had camped in solitary places, and communed with nature in her forest cathedrals. He liked the silences.

The moment that this amazing boat-load came aboard the *Galatea* he saw himself plunged into a scene, if ever there was one. Malcolm Fraser was bursting with information and explanations. Mrs. Larpent gave every indication of the fact that she felt that some justification for her presence was required, and behind Beatrix's impish laugh there was a high-spirited story waiting to be told.

Just for one moment Franklin stood bare-headed in front of Beatrix completely and utterly nonplussed. She was the last person on earth whom he had expected to see on the yacht. He had, indeed, made up his mind never to see her again.— to cut and run from the pain

of her, the allurement, the overwhelming attraction. He gazed at her as if she had fallen from the clouds. He had been treated like a child again, "used" once more, and he was angry, but as he took in her charming appearance, the calm audacity of her expression, the indescribable loveliness of her face, he rejoiced. Then he pulled himself together and tried to perform the operation of smiling as a new husband should. "You're in excellent time," he said, and gave a shout, caught the eye of the mate and beckoned him to come forward. "Get everything ready for Mrs. Franklin and Mrs. Larpent. Look alive and have Mr. Fraser's things taken down to his stateroom at once."

The mate was English. "Aye! Aye, sir!" He was also young and sandy and somewhat precocious, and from the tail-end of his eye there came a look of deep admiration for the owner's wife, whom he now saw for the first time.

"Stop a minute," said Franklin. "I don't see anything of your maid, Beatrix. You'll never be able to get along without her."

"You're very thoughtful," said Beatrix, graciously. "Anyone would think you had been on a honeymoon before." And then she laughed. "For some reason or other Helene is very much afraid of you. I brought her, but evidently she's hidden behind something,— the baggage probably." She called "Helene," and the pretty face and compact figure of the young Breton appeared reluctantly from behind several huge innovation trunks, hat-boxes, boot-cases, cabin-trunks, and the Lord knows what besides,— enough, as it

seemed to Franklin, to supply half a dozen wives with unnecessaries.

"Perhaps you'll go below with Mr. Jones and make your own arrangements. Otherwise, I'm afraid you won't be very comfortable."

Beatrix smiled in her best social manner. "It's too bad to put you to all this inconvenience and worry," she said. "I'm so sorry, but I dare say we shall all fit in with perfect ease and comfort. More like a young liner than a yacht, isn't she? And who named her the *Galatea?* So terribly suitable, as little Mrs. Reeves would say. Lead the way, Mr. Jones."

There was a touch of almost navy etiquette about the way in which the mate saluted and obeyed.

Beatrix beckoned to Helene, who was as frightened as a rabbit at sight of dogs, and the little party went below. Franklin watched her go, saw her look about her with a touch of perfectly simple excitement, envied the sun as she put up her face to catch it and the friendly smile with which she rewarded the mate. "If only," he said to himself, "if only ——"

And then Mrs. Larpent came forward. There was a most curious little smile round her very red lips and wide nostrils, and a whole dictionary of meaning in her eyes. "You must be a little surprised to see ——"

Franklin cut her short. "Not at all. Delighted!" he said, bluntly. "Would you be good enough to follow Beatrix and take your choice of staterooms? I will endeavor to get a stewardess for you before we sail."

"Thanks, so much!" said Ida Larpent, making no

attempt to disguise her sense of triumph at being on the yacht. "How delightful it will be to get away from the land and its people for a time. I congratulate you on the *Galatea*."

Franklin waited until she had disappeared and then strode over to Malcolm Fraser, who was watching the arriving baggage, took his arm and marched him out of ear-shot of the crew. "What the devil have you done? You call yourself a friend and land me in this mess!" His voice was thick with anger.

Fraser looked as astonished as he felt. "But you called me down to the Vanderdykes to do this very thing," he said. "I've done it. What's the trouble?"

"You colossal idiot!" said Franklin. "Haven't you imagination enough to see it for yourself? Have you forgotten every blessed thing that I told you last night? You haven't persuaded this girl to come aboard to oblige her people or to keep my name out of the papers. She doesn't give a solitary curse whether hers is in them or not. She's come just to have the satisfaction of playing with fire, and has brought Ida Larpent because she knows instinctively that she is the last woman on earth I care to see her with or have on the *Galatea*."

All the way back to town, Fraser had been congratulating himself on having achieved the impossible. He opened his mouth to speak.

"I think you'd better dry up," said Franklin, "and give me time to cool down. At this moment I feel like pitching you overboard." He turned on his heel, went

forward and stood, with his hands thrust into his pockets, gazing down the river.

Like all poets, Malcolm Fraser was a very sensitive person. He was deeply hurt at the way in which his efforts were received by the man for whom he had a very deep regard. Like all poets,— even those who confine themselves to gloomy verses, to graves and broken hearts and wind in the trees,— he was an optimist. He had made up his mind that he had only to get Beatrix away to sea with Franklin to bring romance into their very strange, exotic story. He held the belief,— shared by many philosophers,— that in most cases love is the outcome of propinquity,— especially at sea. He didn't possess much, but he would give it all to watch the girl he loved become a woman and find herself for love of his friend. He threw a sympathetic glance at the square shoulders of his friend, and went below to his own familiar stateroom. From this he could hear Beatrix's merry laugh. She, at any rate, seemed to be happy, and that was something. He could not for the life of him understand,— with his friend's confession still warm in his memory,— why, he, too, was not in the seventh heaven of delight at the fulfilment of what had yesterday seemed to be a dream. To the amazing unconventionality of the whole affair he gave no thought. He was an artist.

Finally, and with a huge effort to master his anger and amazement, joy and sense of impending trouble, Franklin summed things up to the best of his ability: "Here's Beatrix," he said to himself, "not married to

me,— supposedly on our honeymoon. I love her like an idiotic school-boy — she loathes me like the devil. Here's Ida Larpent, out for everything that she can get, playing her own hand with all the cunning of a card-sharp. Here's Fraser, one of the very best, a man with a heart of gold to whom friendship means loyalty, with a love for Beatrix which has outlasted his boyhood. And almost in sight of us all is the open sea. Great Scott, what a mess!"

And then Captain McBean stood at his elbow. "Orders stand, sir?"

"Of course," said Franklin. "But before we put off do what you can to get a stewardess aboard for Mrs. Larpent. You had better send Jones ashore. He has a wide smile and does things pretty quick, and, — wait a second, Captain,— let him bring back all the latest novels that he can find. We shall need something to keep the ladies busy."

The Captain chuckled. He had been married twice.

XVII

The *Galatea* was under way at two o'clock,— a clear, bright, sparkling afternoon with a hot sun, a transparent sky and hardly a puff of wind. Built on thorough sea-going lines, newly painted and in apple-pie order and carrying a crew of forty men she was, as well she might be, the envy of passing craft. Men who knew, ran their eyes along her graceful lines with admiration and took pleasure in her swan-like movement. Others on tugboats, shifting a quid, made rough guesses as to her daily cost in the manner of women talking over the clothes, jewels and spendings of a distinguished leader of society.

About one-thirty two things happened,— the first of them comic, the other not without a touch of pathos. The sandy-headed mate, Horatio Jones, whose middle name of Nelson was dropped by him with a sneaking sense of its unfitness, had used his wide smile and glib tongue to some purpose and returned to the yacht with Mrs. O'Dowd after a busy thirty minutes. The young Irish, childless, wife of a sea-faring friend of his, she was not above earning good wages as stewardess and taking a look at the world, her husband being away. Also he brought with him a heterogeneous box full of what the book-seller had called the latest novels, but some of them had been out six months and so were in

ripe old age. There was no time to make much of a choice, but Jones had, as usual, looked after himself by seeing that his collection included Rex Beach, Jack London, Irvin Cobb, Robert Chambers, Gene Stratton-Porter and Sinclair Lewis. It was simply to make up weight that he threw in Wells, Walpole, Dunsany, Lucas Malet, Conrad, Galsworthy, and other drawing-room "geezers," as he called them. They meant nothing to him. He handed Mrs. O'Dowd over to the chief steward and with an air of pride and satisfaction followed the case down to the library and arranged its pristine contents in a long alluring line on the centre table. It seemed to him that the hardly-ever read sporting and technical volumes behind the glass of all the cases turned up their noses in contempt.

The pathetic incident was the unexpected arrival of little Mrs. Lester Keene, who came on board with the air of a moving picture heroine chased by at least six desperate and obviously made up villains armed to the teeth. A little bag into which she had placed all her small items of jewelry and other treasures was clutched in one agitated hand and she carried an umbrella in the other. She was one of those women who regard an umbrella as the patent of respectability rather than as a weapon of service. She took it with her walking or driving,— wet or fine. It was a fetish, an institution. Deprived of her umbrella she would have felt like an actor without his daily advertisement or an Oxford Don caught naked by a chambermaid. She was assisted aboard, with many gasps, by a deck hand, and drew up expecting apparently to see pirates and

the skull and cross bones. Franklin turned and saw her and smiled a welcome.

For some reason which he didn't endeavor to define he was glad to see the admirable little woman who had won his complete respect and admiration in her endeavor to put up a fight in Beatrix's bedroom that memorable night. "My dear Mrs. Keene," he said, holding out his hand, "I'm delighted to see you. Welcome to the *Galatea!* I was wondering how it was that my wife came to leave you behind."

Mrs. Keene bridled with indignation. "Your wife?" she said. "Well, this is really a most extraordinary country."

"I beg your pardon," said Franklin, "I should have said Miss Vanderdyke." It had seemed to him quite natural to use the word "wife."

"That's why I have come," said Mrs. Keene, her rather loose skin wabbling nervously. "Need I say more?"

"Nothing more, but I must ask you at once to oblige me by remembering that everybody on this yacht believes, and must continue to believe, that Miss Vanderdyke is Mrs. Franklin. You know why as well as I do. That is understood, of course." His question, behind which there was very palpably the suggestion of a drastic course of action, achieved a bow from Mrs. Keene. He then pointed to a small suit-case. "Is that all you've brought?"

"I had no time to pack anything else," she said. "Where is Beatrix?"

"Below, settling for the cruise."

"The cruise? Is this to be a cruise? Can nothing prevent this rash act?"

Franklin shook his head. "You know Beatrix, Mrs. Keene."

The little woman, who had great grit and even heroism beneath her indecisive and fluttering exterior, drew herself up. "Very good," she said, "I shall do what I conceive to be my duty." All the same she threw an anxious glance about her. It was quite obvious that she was looking for life-belts, life-boats, rafts and all the other paraphernalia of shipwrecks. No one could guess, nor did she herself quite realize, the immensity of her triumph of mind over matter in trusting herself at sea or the extent of the damage to her sense of propriety that was made by her being obliged to lend her countenance to a quite indescribable proceeding. If she had imagined that she would ever find herself a companion to a young woman who went for a honeymoon with a man to whom she had not been married she would willingly have starved in London or taken a position as a waitress in an A. B. C. shop.

"I was not well last night," she said, with a quiver in her voice. "I had one of my most severe attacks of neuralgia. I overslept myself this morning. I can only think that Beatrix left me behind because she was too thoughtful to disturb me. Mr. Franklin, I am not very strong. I have had a terrible time to get here. You must please forgive my agitation."

Franklin felt thoroughly inclined to put his arm round the tremulous lady's shoulder and say, "There, there!" as Beatrix always did, and soothe her with soft

words. It seemed to him that she was, with her pedantic and old-fashioned ideas, rather like the Dodo in the century to which he belonged, or that she resembled a faded stuffed canary under a glass case in a room furnished and painted by cubists. "You will find your stateroom very comfortable," he said, "and I will do all that I can to make you happy and contented. I'm very glad you've come."

"Thank you! You are kinder than my former experience led me to expect. And now, please, where are the stairs?"

Franklin smothered his laugh. He was glad for her sake that the mate was not in earshot. He called up one of the deck boys. "Take Mrs. Lester Keene below," he said, "and tell the chief steward to look after her."

It so happened that Mrs. Keene was immediately seen by Beatrix, and before Franklin moved away he heard her high, clear voice. "Brownie, you darling! Fancy seeing you here. I left you with red flannel round your face. You must have come by aeroplane." And then he heard the sound of someone bursting into tears and moved away.

It was not until the *Galatea* had left her mooring well behind her that Malcolm Fraser screwed up his courage to face his friend. He found Franklin forward with his arms folded and a pipe between his teeth, watching the amazing skyline of the receding city, and running his eyes over the great docks that lined the banks of the river, the gigantic ferries, the impertinent tugs and a transatlantic liner being edged inch by inch

into her berth, her portside all a-flutter with waving handkerchiefs.

For several minutes Fraser stood shoulder to shoulder with his best pal, waiting for him to turn. He would have waited for an hour without a word because he had the rare gift of imagination and therefore of sympathy. The two are twins. But presently Franklin turned and there was an irresistible twinkle in his eyes. "Now then," he said, as though continuing a conversation, "how the blazes did you do it?"

To Fraser that twinkle was worth a great deal. "Do you want to know the details, old man?"

"'Course I do. Women aren't the only curious animals on earth, y' know."

"After you had left," said Fraser gravely, "I tackled Beatrix. I had to wait until the dance was over and most of the people had gone to bed. Oddly enough I caught her at a moment when she was more like the little simple girl with whom I used to play games as a kid than I've seen her for years. Perhaps it was due to the moon or the stars,— or both. Anyway she took my arm and we wandered into the garden and for quite a long time we talked of the old days and some of the things that she used to dream about. I think the fairies must have been dancing somewhere near. Then I switched things round to the present and told her, pretty plainly, what I conceived it to be her duty to do to retrieve herself. I spoke to her honestly and bluntly, like a brother, and she was very patient and listened to me without a word. I didn't exaggerate things at all. I didn't see how I could

They've gone to the whole lengths of exaggeration already. I talked about her family and their wholesome desire to avoid scandal, and I painted a picture of what York could do to put the name of Vanderdyke, which stands so high, into the kitchen, the garage and the reeking saloon. I pointed out that if, for the first time in her life, she didn't do something all against the grain she would jeopardize the noble efforts of Aunt Honoria and outrage all the endeavors of her father and mother to build up an aristocracy in this country. I believe I must have talked for half an hour and all the time she sat with her hands clasped together and the moonlight on her face, more beautiful than I have ever seen her look and more like the child that she used to be before she discovered the intolerance of wealth and had been spoiled by the obsequiousness of everybody round her. Just when I thought that I had won my point and was beginning to feel the warm glow of triumph, she got up. 'My dear old Malcolm, no wonder you write poetry,' she said. 'You are a sort of cherub, my dear. You have a head — a very nice head — and two wings, and that's all. All the same there is much heart in your eloquence and an immense amount of common sense. The only thing is, I don't intend to marry Pelham Franklin under any circumstances whatever, so God bless you, old boy, and good night.' And with that she turned away, sang a little song and foxtrotted through the gardens on to the terrace and into the house. Presently I saw a light in her window, gave the whole thing up and went off to bed with my tail between my legs. Imagine my

surprise when about eight o'clock this morning a discreet man-servant brought me a letter from her. Here it is." He slipped it out of his pocket and read it aloud:

"Dear Poet:

"I have altered my mind just to prove to you that I am a woman after all, little as you think so. Also,— two reasons are better than one,— because I am bored stiff and have decided to take a cruise on the *Galatea.* But you must come, because we shall need a fourth at bridge, — make that an absolute stipulation,— and Mrs. Larpent will make the third. Pack your little trunk, dear Malcolm, and be ready immediately after breakfast. Heigh-ho, for the wind and the sea."

"H'm," said Franklin, "she beats me."

XVIII

As he sat down to dinner that night in the admirable saloon, wholly devoid of the frills and furbelows which are so dear to the hearts of incurable landlubbers, Franklin threw an amused glance at Malcolm Fraser, who read it, laughed and signalled back. "Yes, by Jove, a very different table from the one we're used to! How about compensations?"

Franklin looked from one guest to another, with close scrutiny. He caught the meaning of Fraser's mental question. Compensation?

Beatrix Vanderdyke, dressed as though she were a woman of thirty bound for the opera,— in the highest spirits, her laugh ringing out frequently; Mrs. Claude Larpent, with her irresistible touch of Paris, her fingers gleaming with rings and a queer Oriental stone which might have been the eye of some skeptical god watching everyone from her hair; and Mrs. Lester Keene, the very epitome of the Kensington of Thackeray's time, her nondescript hair, much touched with grey, scrupulously drawn back from her forehead, her mouse-colored dress lightened by a lace thing round her shoulders which might easily have been an antimacassar.

Malcolm Fraser also ran his eye round the table at which he had hitherto seen the open, healthy faces and

square shoulders of Franklin's sporting friends. He was not at all sure,— perhaps because he was a poet,— that this new sight was not more pleasant to him than the old one. There was, however, one question that he asked himself again. "Why Mrs. Larpent?" He was not in any sense of the word a man of the world. He believed that all women were chaste and devoid of guile, but there was something about Mrs. Larpent which made him a little sorry to see her in the company of Beatrix,— he didn't know why. The portholes were open, as the night was hot. They framed round patches of a sky pitted with stars. The steady conscientious pulse of the engines and the slight swing of the yacht were the only indications of her activity. An excellent dinner was being served by four expert stewards who had devoted the most minute care in the decoration of the table in honor of "Mrs. Franklin." In the gallery a string quartette with piano was playing *Bohême,* almost to perfection. There was just the slightest inclination on the part of the pianist to syncopate the music. The poor wretch had been doomed to a cabaret for two seasons.

Franklin, partly recovered from his shock, was determined to make the best of things. The sight of Beatrix in all the glory of her youth was a delight to him. It filled him with joy and pride to see her sitting in that yacht of his, which he regarded as home. His blood danced every time that her laugh rang out. She added something to the atmosphere of the saloon which he had always subconsciously missed and desired. Nevertheless he told himself, and believed it to be true,

that he had routed out of his mind every thought of making her his wife, even in name. Her dislike of him, expressed very definitely, and now shown by the aloof but perfectly courteous way in which she included him in the conversation, made the mere idea of such a thing impossible and absurd. She was on board to please herself, to carry out a whim and an impulse to do something new and different, and she had taken care to surround herself with a body guard in order to protect her. He saw all that and shrugged his shoulders. He said, as he had said over and over again, "She beats me. I can't compete with her. I give it up. She must have her head. At any rate all this will do something to put York off the scent, so what's the use of worrying? I bow the knee to autocracy." That was the mood of the man who had never hitherto allowed himself to be beaten by men or beasts. Women were not included in this list for the simple reason that they had never been permitted to interfere with his way of life.

As for Beatrix, she was not thinking, dissecting or going to the mental bother of introspection. She was enjoying a new sensation, delighting in the thrill of a dangerous and what would be to most girls an inconceivable adventure. She looked upon the whole thing as merely an episode, an act in the drama of her life, and with enough sense of excitement to spur her on played her part of Franklin's wife with one appreciative eye on herself. She believed that York would carry out his threat, knowing the man as well as she did, and she knew that as soon as the whole house of

cards fell flat, as it was bound to do, her family, headed by Aunt Honoria, would punish severely. They would spoil her life at least for a year. She had gone on the cruise because the word "yacht" had filled her with the desire to smell the sea and try a new form of amusement. That was all. Franklin, either as a man or an enemy, or as one who had come to her rescue, counted for nothing. He meant no more to her than Captain McBean or Mr. Horatio Jones. He was merely the means of providing her with the antidote against boredom. She was out to enjoy a new experience at his expense. Hurrah for the open sea! Sufficient for the day, so long as the day was fine and the people in it kept her merry.

When it came to Ida Larpent and the way in which she regarded her totally unexpected presence on the *Galatea,* the mental processes of her mind were as busily at work as the mechanical appliances of the ship's engine. This was no mere joy-ride for her. It was a business trip, the chances of which had been grasped eagerly with all the cunning of a woman who had lived on her wits and brought individualism to a fine art. She was going to use every moment to her own ultimate advantage. The fact that Beatrix had placed her among her favorites was an admirable step forward. She was clever enough to know that the sunshine of the beautiful young autocrat's smile might at any moment cloud over,— that her reign as a favorite was most ephemeral. But she had already watched things closely and had come to the conclusion that the marriage which had caused so much rejoicing among

the Vanderdykes, romantic as it seemed, was an empty and hollow affair. She saw very plainly that the heart of Beatrix was utterly untouched. She had yet to discover precisely how Franklin had been affected. She was no optimist, but it seemed to her that Franklin was as cool as Beatrix. He had, however, a way of hiding his feelings that would make it necessary for her to put him under her microscope. As things appeared on the surface, at any rate, everything was in her favor. She measured herself against Beatrix without egotism. The girl had all the advantage of youth and,— as her knowledge of men told her,— many of the disadvantages. She was going to set herself with the utmost calculation to stir up Franklin's passion. It seemed to her that the propinquity forced upon them all by living aboard a yacht would make that easy. She had examined herself in the mirror of her stateroom and come to the conclusion that she had never looked more beautiful or so completely feminine. Without any sense of loyalty to Beatrix, to whom she was indebted for this chance, she had made up her mind to attract Franklin with all the arts that she possessed. To become his mistress meant absolute freedom from money troubles, and that would be excellent. To become his wife,— well, why not? The laws of the country were all in her favor. Divorce was a hobby, an institution, and Beatrix was a worshipper at the altar of Something New.

When it came to Malcolm Fraser, whom Beatrix had called the fourth of the party,— he was usually the fourth of every party,— what was he but simply

a man who could do no more than enjoy the glamour of the impossible — a sort of star-gazer! His love for Beatrix dominated his secret life and he knew that he could show it only in one way,— by being her friend. He had no pain in his heart. He had no right to possess a heart at all where she was concerned, but no one could prevent him from placing her in the throne of it and locking her in. And so he just revelled in her presence and was happy.

There remained little Mrs. Lester Keene, the last member of this strange ill-assorted party, and she, who took everything seriously, and whose god was convention, was undergoing very genuine suffering. To be herself a party to any arrangement so unabashed in its smashing of all the rules of life was bad enough. Her self-respect, which meant so much to her, was deeply wounded, and when she thought of the girl who seemed to her to be a sort of queen and for whose beauty and purity she had the most intense admiration and regard, her perturbation became painful, even tragical. She suspected Franklin. Like all women who have gone through life looking at the truth through a key-hole, herself hidden, she believed no good of men. They were all wolves in sheep's clothing. They were the enemies of women. She conceived Franklin to be no different from those worldly creatures of whom she had read so frequently in her favorite novels, most of which had been written in the period of her youth by women. She was, therefore, most unhappy. She was also dreading sea-sickness. Poor little lady, what a combination of mental disquiet!

XIX

Franklin and Fraser left the dining saloon after a brief talk and joined the ladies in the little used drawing-room. They found that the orchestra, which was as much a part of the yacht as the engines and invariably played Franklin's favorite melodies during and after dinner, had been dismissed. The Victrola was at work instead and the voluptuous strains of a more than usually saccharine Viennese waltz filled the charming room.

Franklin drew up short at the door and put his hand on Fraser's arm. "Look," he said, quietly.

With absolute lack of self-consciousness and a nymph-like grace, her lips wearing the smile of a child, Beatrix was dancing and winding her way between the chairs and little tables. With her white arms outstretched and her hands moving like the wings of a bird she seemed to bring the music to life and to give it a sense of youth and beauty that turned the room into a moon-struck wood of thin trees.

The two men watched her until the tune ran out and in the hearts of both were love and desire.

Franklin went quickly to the Victrola, wound it up and started the record again.

"What a pity you don't dance, Malcolm," said Beatrix, panting a little.

"But I do," said Franklin, and took her in his arms. He didn't imagine himself to be a fine dancer. He had a healthy contempt of the dancing man breed,—those anæmic creatures who try so hard to look immaculate and treat all women with a tedious mixture of familiarity and condescension. He waltzed well, all the same, with a perfectly straight back, an excellent sense of time and a steady left arm. In fact he danced like a civilized man who had achieved the art of not being noticed in a crowd.

From her deep and comfortable chair under the reading lamp Ida Larpent, with a determined exposure of lace stocking, watched this little scene with quiet amusement. It seemed to her that those two danced like people who had been married for years. They said nothing. They didn't look at each other. They were as much two people as though they were at opposite ends of the earth. The almost grim expression on Franklin's face made jealousy impossible. So also did the slight air of social martyrdom that was all about Beatrix. Anyone less expert as a psychologist than Ida Larpent could have told that Beatrix merely performed a duty. It would, however, have taken a quite microscopic eye to have seen the riotous blaze in Franklin's mind.

To Mrs. Lester Keene's mid-Victorian way of thinking, this "exhibition," as she inwardly called it, watching from behind the new number of *Vogue,* was singularly bad form. If she had known the expressive word "stunt" she would have applied it with all her British horror of such a thing.

"And now," said Beatrix, when once more the popular tune arrived at its inevitable and hackneyed conclusion, "for bridge. Don't you think so?"

Franklin rang for a steward. The blood was in his head. The intoxication of the girl's fragrance was all about his brain. "Good God," he said to himself, "how am I going to go through this and come out sane?"

"Splendid," said Mrs. Larpent, putting down "The Dark Flower." "I'd love a rubber or two."

"And I," said Fraser,—"that is if you don't want to play, Mrs. Keene."

"Thank you, but I never touch cards." The little lady returned to her astonished examination of the drawings of wispy girls in freak garments. She invariably waxed almost hectic over the bi-monthly issues of her favorite journal, every word of which she read with minute care. It was to her rather like the thing at which a dog barks consistently and with a very fever of rage but wouldn't avoid on any account.

A steward appeared. "The card table," said Franklin.

"But before we play," said Beatrix, lighting a cigarette, "perhaps you'll tell us the geography of the yacht. Pelham, I won't sleep peacefully unless my curiosity is satisfied. I asked Malcolm at dinner but he's apparently as much of a landlubber as I am." She knew instinctively that this was the very best way to please Franklin and she felt that she owed him something for her unsocial manner in the dining saloon. She intended to enjoy the cruise and there-

fore it would be tactful, to say the least of it, to keep him in a good temper.

Franklin was obviously pleased. The *Galatea* was his favorite toy. He picked up a photograph album, laid it open on a table and pointed to an admirable picture of the yacht lying at anchor in the Biscayne Bay.

Beatrix bent over it. Her dress left very little to the imagination.

"I bought her after the death of her first owner," he said. "He was an eccentric invalid, as you will see when I explain certain things. She was built in the Clyde about eight years ago. Her tonnage is sixteen hundred and seven, length all over three hundred and sixteen feet, beam thirty-five feet six and she carries a crew of forty, all told. You can see how beautiful her lines are. To my mind she has nothing of her class to compete against. It's true that some sailors carp at one thing in her appearance,— the way her bridge is placed. Do you see? Instead of being well forward as it usually is, you will notice that it's away aft,— only a few feet from the funnel."

"Why?" asked Beatrix, not even mildly interested.

"To prevent anyone from walking over the library. A cranky idea of the old man I told you about. In fact the *Galatea* was designed to meet his peculiar notions."

"Why not?" said Beatrix. "He had the money."

"Quite," said Franklin drily. "Well, this, where my finger is, is the flush deck, running from the bows

to the stern, broken here by a well between the forecastle head and the fore part of the bridge."

Beatrix laughed. "You're a regular sailor, aren't you?"

Franklin went on. It was good to be so near to this bewitching girl. He would have liked to absorb her attention for the whole evening. "Running aft from the bridge to within forty feet or so of the stern are all the deck houses. Do you see? Here's the library. Abaft, here, the dining saloon. Continuing aft, on the port side, here, the pantry, the enclosed space over the engine-room, and on the starboard side a passage leading to this room and the writing-room."

"And I don't believe you ever use either," said Beatrix.

"I don't. Now look. The roof and sides of this line of deck houses run out a few feet beyond the aftermost room. Do you notice that?"

"So that your malade imaginaire could have a little sheltered nook to enjoy forty winks in out of the wind?"

"Yes, that was the idea. Very jolly it is too. Here's the promenade, about nine feet broad and smooth as a billiard ball. It continues across the forepart of the library and across the afterpart of the line of deck houses, see? So that there's an oblong track round most of the yacht, covered overhead with a thick awning."

"Ah! I see myself taking exercise there morning, noon and night."

"We all do," said Malcolm.

"Well, about thirty feet from the stern, here, there's a double canvas screen running thwartships from one side to the other, shutting off a good space for the use of the crew. Under the forecastle head, on the main deck, are the officers' and petty officers' quarters, very comfortable and excellent. Under the library is my sitting-room, which runs the whole breadth of the ship. This is where we usually foregather,— I mean on the bachelor cruises."

"Which are now things of the past," said Beatrix imperturbably. "Are we to be permitted to peek into this sanctum some day?"

"Of course." Franklin's heart pumped a little.

And then, rising with her peculiar feline grace, Mrs. Larpent joined the group round the table. "All these technicalities are Greek to me," she said. "I want to know how many guest rooms there are, how many bathrooms, whether the mirrors are full length, whether you bought all the rugs from the same place and if so whether you got them cheaper and, in fact, all those human details that I can understand,— poor, untechnical me!"

Franklin gave a short laugh but was obviously thrown out. His description of the *Galatea* was in the only language that he knew. He was unable to translate it into woman's talk.

Beatrix was quick to notice his quandary. Nearly everything that he had said was altogether beyond her too and gave her no more intimate a picture of the yacht than she would have obtained from a quick

glance at a blue-print, but, after all, she intended to explore in the morning, so what did it matter? Her pricking conscience had alone brought the matter up. "Never mind about the furniture," she said. "Go on from where your finger is, Pelham. I'm following you with keen intelligence and boundless interest."

Franklin gave her a grateful smile. "Well, the windows, here, abaft of my room on the port side are the cabins of the major-domo, the Captain, the head steward, the chief engineer, the purser, an officers' mess room, the ship's galley, a steward's mess room and other cabins. Over here on the starboard side are the guest rooms and suites,— twenty all told. The lower-deck is given up to stores, coal bunkers, the engine room, the stoke-hold, a stack of electric accumulators which keep the electric lights going when the engines aren't working, and the gymnasium. The engines are designed not for speed but for smooth running. We can whack up to twelve knots an hour but our average is eight. Finally we carry an ample supply of boats as well as two steam launches, one burning coal, the other oil." He bowed and laughed and said "I thank you" in imitation of the professional guide, closed the album and put it away, having thoroughly enjoyed himself.

"And this very beautiful and complete toy," thought Ida Larpent, looking after the owner of it with calculating envy and admiration, "costs as much to run per annum as would make an admirable capital for a little lonely woman. My dear, you will be

throwing away the opportunity of a life-time if you don't make yourself very precious to this indecently wealthy young man."

Then they sat down to bridge.

XX

The third day out, the semblance of peace and contentment reigning on board, the *Galatea* ran into bad weather. The barometer had fallen sharply during the night and the day broke behind a dull grey curtain to windward which blotted out the horizon and brought heavy rain as it came over. Capricious shifts of wind in puffy spells made the awnings rattle and the sea agitated. The Captain stuck to his course until the squall caught him, and then, in deference to the ladies, ran with the sea astern. Before four o'clock in the afternoon, however, the wind fell away and the sky cleared and the sun came out again to the immense relief of Mrs. Lester Keene, who had given way to seasickness and to thoughts of disaster and death.

The weather, like nearly everything else, had not affected Beatrix. With Mrs. Larpent and Malcolm Fraser as spectators, she spent most of the morning in the gymnasium exercising her limbs and her lungs, — the former on the bars and rings and the electrically-worked horse, the latter by frequent bursts of merry laughter and constant talking. The newness of her surroundings had not yet worn off. The sense of being the heroine of a most daring adventure was still upon her. Then too, she found her new friend,

whose peculiar beauty had attracted her, entertaining and, better still, interesting, and her old one as eager to fetch and carry and as willing to pay her deference as ever. So far as Franklin was concerned he remained the man who had said an unforgivable thing and who was, by accident, her host. He counted only as such.

But that night, having laid a restraining hand upon herself, Nature, who does not appear to be happy unless she can exert her power in some way, churned up a storm on the yacht. She brought about two incidents which, both quite unnecessary, did much to make this so-called honeymoon cruise lose its outward peacefulness. It is her invariable way.

The first happened before dinner, the second after, and both were led up to by the clash of temperament. The return of the sun had something to do with the first. Its warmth and brightness sent Beatrix's spirits, already high, up to set-fair. Tea was served on deck. To Franklin's inward rage Fraser immediately became the object of Beatrix's whole attention. She called him "Mally," talked almost tenderly about the old days, drew him out on the subject of books and life and then, utterly ignoring the others, paced up and down with her arm through his, listening with the rapt wonder of a little girl while he recited his recent verses to her.

It was when he had run his not very retentive memory down that she began to talk about herself. "Mally," she said suddenly, "do you remember a dream I told you about one spring morning when we

were sitting on a log at the edge of those dear old woods? You had been ill, I think, and your mother had sent for you from school to feed you up."

"I remember," said Malcolm. "You were eight or so, and I had just struck fifteen and was consumed with the idea that I was a man. I had just introduced myself to a razor. Oh, a great moment in the male career!"

"Don't talk so much, Mally dear. This is my innings. I told you that I had dreamed that father had lost all his money, every cent of it, and was broken and helpless and that mother,— how queerly right it was,— had gone to bed permanently from the shock, and then I blossomed into a Joan of Arc because the night before that funny little French governess, Mademoiselle Hannebigue, had been reading to me about her, and I went out into the world,— it was New York, of course,— to build up a new fortune for my unfortunate parents."

"What became of Miss Hannebigue, by the way?"

"That doesn't matter. Don't drag red herrings across our path. I became a great artist in about a minute and painted a picture that caused such a sensation that I sold it to a gorgeous person with a golden beard and blue eyes for oh, millions and millions of dollars. And just before some vandal woke me up, — not Hannebigue because she was in mortal terror of me,— I was carrying it all up to father in a big brown bag. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember. Why?"

Beatrix said nothing for a moment, and as Malcolm

looked at her beautiful face and long fine lashes and the little wistful smile on her lips he saw the fallen log again, and the young birches just broken into leaf; the little big-eyed girl who had ordered him about and the pair of new brown shoes that he had put on that day and which hurt him very much.

"Mally, I never read about Joan of Arc now," she said. "I'm ashamed. Never again, as long as I live, shall I ever have a chance to do big things, and sometimes,— not very often,— but just for a minute when I hear a wonderful piece of music or see the sun go down as it did last night,— I wish that father had really lost all his money and I was an artist or something working for him. Oh, Mally, old thing, I'm not really much good these days and I might have been,— I really might have been. You're a poet. You get closer to the angels than ordinary mortals. What can I do? How shall I become something? Is there no way for me to justify having once been able to carry that funny old bulging bag up to father?"

It was Malcolm's turn to say nothing for a moment. From where they stood he could see Franklin's clean-cut profile as he sat with his chin on his fist looking out to sea. And the man who was his friend and whose story he knew, seemed to look awfully alone and hurt. And then he spoke, eagerly, with a great and God-sent unselfishness. "Dear girl," he said, "my dear little girl, open your heart to Pel. That's the way."

The next instant the warm young arm was pulled

sharply away from his own and a scoffing laugh was carried off like a bird. "Not in this world," she cried. "Not in this world!"

And then, with a little devil on her shoulder, the same little devil that had made her do all her foolish, impulsive, inconsistent things, she went over to where Franklin was sitting and stood with one foot on the deck chair vacated by Ida Larpent, who had found it difficult to get any attention. The girl's brain was suddenly filled with an impish desire to flick her host's apparent imperturbability with the whip of sarcasm.

"Well," she said, putting a note of bonhomie into her voice that Franklin had never heard before, and liked. "Thinking,— for a change?"

He got up and stood with his back to one of the iron supports. "Why for a change?" Good Heavens, what a picture she made, standing there!

"I've always been under the impression that sportsmen never think."

Franklin laughed. What did he care what she said so that she spoke to him, and he saw the flash of her teeth, the gleam of her dimples, the play of her astounding eyes? "You mean, being a sportsman, I don't need and have not been given, the necessary machinery for thinking?"

"I wouldn't for a moment go so far as that," she said, with a curiously expressive gesture which completely contradicted her remark. "You spend most of your time on the *Galatea*, don't you?"

"Yes, as much as I can."

"I don't wonder. I'm beginning to understand

that there must be something very satisfying in being the Czar of this little Kingdom,— it's really the only way to feel the full power of wealth, unless you work and control great interests and feed your vanity like that. Democracies worship the monied man, I know, but there is really a touch of the old feudal system in life on a yacht like this. Officers and men, forty of them, are your slaves. It's "Yes, sir; No, sir; Come aboard, sir; I'll make it so, sir," all day long, and, unlike a mere world, the very yacht can be ordered to change her course, put in or put out, at your imperial command. Yes, I begin to feel the fascination of the life you've chosen."

She said all this thoughtfully, disguising the rank impertinence of it under a sort of naïve admiration.

It puzzled Franklin. He was too simple and direct to get her point of view and not willing to believe that he was being gratuitously "cheeked." "You've got me wrong," he said. "I live on the sea because I like it and because I hate cities and society and newspapers and their gross publicity. That's all."

She knew that he was speaking the truth. She knew also that her elaborate sarcasm had missed fire. She tried again. The little devil was still on her shoulder. "Oh, I see," she said, acting astonishment. "You're like the little boy who builds a hut in the back yard and forces himself to believe that he's hundreds of thousands of miles away from home. You come to sea to dodge the responsibilities of real life. You float lazily about on the water like a sportsman and leave the earth to be run by mere men. Well, I

daresay there's something in it. Hullo, there goes the first bugle. I must go and dress."

She nodded and slipped away chortling, perfectly certain that she had let Franklin see how very little she thought of him, and on the way down to her suite she flung the little devil away and paid her companion a visit with all the sympathy and tenderness of a young Madonna.

She was right. Franklin felt the cut of her whip on his conscience. Many times recently, during lonely hours, he had cursed himself as a waster of time and opportunity and wondered how much longer he was going to be content to be numbered amongst the drones. All the same he bitterly resented being flicked by this girl, herself the queen of drones, who, of all the women alive, had good reason to thank her stars for his sportsmanship. And he went below angry, dissatisfied and indignant. By jove, he would get one back for this.

His chance came after dinner. He left Malcolm in the drawing-room waiting for the bridge table to be set, heard the Victrola on deck and went out to find Beatrix all alone, dancing like the spirit of spring. Ida Larpent, seeing something in his eyes that drew her out of her chair, followed him and hid. He went up to Beatrix. "Dance with me," he said and took her rather roughly in his arms. He felt the urge of holding her as he had never felt it before. His very anger fired his passion. He would show this unbroken thoroughbred that he was a man as well as a sportsman. And so he held her tight, mad with the

gleam of her shoulders and the scent of her hair, danced her breathless and, as the music stopped, imprisoned her in his arms and kissed her lips again and again.

Ida Larpent nearly screamed. The pain of her jealousy was unbearable.

Beatrix fought herself free and stood panting against the rail. And as she stood there with heaving breasts and her hand on her mouth, that unforgivable sentence which had burned itself on her vanity seemed to stand out in letters of fire on the deck house. "If you and I were the only two living people on a desert island and there was not the faintest hope of our ever being taken back to the world, I would build you a hut at the farthest end of it and treat you as a man." This assault, this attack, was all the more nauseating because of its apparent cold-bloodedness, because it was made by the man who had dared to say those words to her. For a moment, with the blood in her head, she was overcome with a desire to cry out for servants and order them to kill that man. All that was imperious in her nature craved for instant punishment. Then, looking at the blaze in Franklin's eyes and mistaking it for the beast in him, she mastered herself and turned cold.

"Just now," she said, "I called you a Czar. I was wrong. You're a polished gun-man."

Franklin laughed. He was still drunk with the taste of her lips. "Can't a man kiss his wife on their honeymoon if he feels like it?"

Beatrix put out both hands to keep him away. She

was as white as moonlight and her eyes shone like stars.

Ida Larpent almost left her place to catch every word.

"Wife! Thank God you will never be able to call me that."

Franklin went nearer,— within an inch of those two sentinel hands. "I didn't begin calling you that. You chose the word, not I." The way she had of putting him in the wrong always, of making him a brute who had tricked her into this impossible position was mighty difficult to bear.

Holding her breath, amazed and delighted at her sudden and unexpected insight into this marriage business which had always puzzled her, Ida Larpent watched these two young people as a cat watches mice, — the girl standing out against the dark background of sky in all the pride of youth, her bare shoulders outlined by the moonlight; the man, tall, wiry and amazingly vital, bending slightly forward, with his hands clenched; the silence hardly broken by the regular pulse of the engines, the humming of the breeze and the soft swish of the sea.

"This is the end," said Beatrix.

"The end,— how?"

"You will put me ashore."

"Where?"

"I don't care. Anywhere."

"Why?"

"Because, I tell you, this is the end."

"You're wrong. This is the beginning."

"I don't intend to argue. I state as a fact that you will put me ashore to-morrow. Whatever happens I am not going to live this lie any longer. Now let me pass."

Franklin went closer. The two hands were against his chest. "You amuse me," he said. "It isn't for you to give orders here. I'm Czar of this Kingdom, remember. You chose to come aboard and you'll stay aboard as long as it suits me."

"You're an optimist," she said, scoffingly.

"Very likely. I'm also human and I'm on my honeymoon." He caught her by the wrists and before he could control himself, kissed her again, threw her hands away and stood back. He was afraid of what he might do next.

Beatrix suppressed a cry, and drew the back of her hand across her mouth. "Once more I'm wrong," she said. "You're not a gun-man. You're a prize-fighter. May I be allowed to go now?"

"To the devil for all I care," said Franklin.

"Thank you. I prefer the bridge table." And he watched her go, walking like a young Diana.

Ida Larpent, with the tumult of a new chance in her queer heart, dodged away.

Then Franklin turned his face to the stars. He was angry, sore,— and ashamed. But as he stood there, face to face with Nature, he said to himself, "One day I'll make that girl ache for my kisses as badly as I ache for hers to-night,— so help me God!"

XXI

Ida Larpent was responsible for the second incident.

With an amount of self-control that under the circumstances seemed to Franklin to be almost inconceivable, Beatrix played bridge until after midnight. She went into the drawing-room with a high head and a radiant smile and began by saying "Mally dear, *you* will be my partner, and we will play together until sunrise, if you like." And as every hand was dealt for the remainder of the sitting she babbled and laughed and said little witty things that set the poet chuckling and won admiration from the woman of the world. And all the while she smoked, telling Mrs. Lester Keene, when that uncompanionable-companion ventured to remonstrate, that she was no longer a débutante and if she wanted to set up a smoker's heart, well, she could. Every now and then, too, perhaps to prove the fact to Franklin that at any rate there was one man aboard who could be trusted, she leant across the table and touched Malcolm's hand. It made him very happy. He was proud to be treated like a brother.

At eleven o'clock Mrs. Keene sighed, began to arrange the magazines on the table at her elbow and said "Dear me, how very late it is," several times, and finally got up and wandered aimlessly about the room. She hadn't the courage to say frankly and honestly

"Now, dear Beatrix, it's time you went to bed. You've played enough and smoked enough and you need all the sleep you can get," but in the inevitable manner of all weak people she endeavored to get her point by a series of the kind of nerve-wracking, unspoken hints which are generally rewarded by a few sharp and even unkind words. Not so from Beatrix. Noticing the worthy woman's restlessness and recognizing her intention she cried out, "Brownie, you really ought to have a nurse. Eleven o'clock and still up,—and you haven't got over that bad attack! Run along to bed, dear, and if I'm not too late I'll peep in for a word or two."

Malcolm, not unsympathetic, smiled a little to see the reluctant way in which the poor little rotund soul obeyed the command of her princess.

It was a quarter past twelve when Beatrix drew away from the table as a rubber ended. "Thank you," she said, "that sees me through. Good night, Ida, sleep well. Good night, Mally dear. For a poet you play a wonderfully sound game." And then, with an exquisite touch of shyness that took Mrs. Larpent's breath away, staggered Malcolm and nearly made Franklin jump out of his skin, she looked up at him and added, "I won't say good night to you," and went out singing a little song beneath her breath.

It was so well done, with an art so true, an inflection so full of meaning, that for an instant Mrs. Larpent asked herself if the angry and definite words which she had recently overheard had ever been said.

They left Malcolm dazed. *Was* she, after all, mar-

ried to his old friend? They were the words of a wife.

The first shock over, Franklin understood. She had let him see that he was a creature to whom she did not bid good night disguised in the soft voice and inviting manner that was intended to keep Mrs. Larpent ignorant of the true state of affairs.

"I'll go over the score in the morning," he said, "and we can settle then. Malcolm, I'm going to write a few letters to-night, so ——"

"All right, old man. I'll turn in right away." He wondered if he did not look a little like the woman at whom he had smiled earlier in the evening.

"So will I," said Mrs. Larpent. "This is all very delightful. I sleep better in this gently-rocking cradle than I've ever done before. Well, good night." She divided a smile between the two men and glided away, as graceful and as silky as a panther.

Franklin let out his foot and kicked a box of matches, that had fallen on the floor, into the chest of a sleepy-eyed young steward, who was already packing up the bridge table. "I'm sorry," he said. If he had had his way at that moment, he would have kicked the earth into the limbo of forgotten things and tumbled after it over the edge.

Malcolm followed him out. He could see what was going on in the mind of the man he knew so well,— the man into whose life no woman had come to torture and disturb till then. "Old man," he said, "if I can be of any ——"

Franklin wheeled 'round and put his hand on Mal-

colm's shoulder. "No, no, my dear chap. You can't help, not even you. Damned fools always pay for their mistakes. So long."

He had been in his room for ten minutes,— walking, walking, with his hands clenched and the fever of love boiling his blood, all alive to the fact that the girl who called herself his wife was, figuratively speaking, in reach of his hungry hand, when someone knocked softly on the door.

"Who is it?"

"I," said Ida Larpent. She shut the door softly behind her. "I want to speak to you."

It was not the first time that she had been in Franklin's own particular room, but heretofore she had seen it with daylight streaming through the portholes. It seemed to be warmer and more intimate and far more suited for her purpose at that quiet hour, lit only by one shaded reading lamp.

There was a curious confidence in her manner which puzzled even Franklin, unversed in the ways and moods of women as he was. She took it for granted that she was welcome, and deliberately looked about for the most comfortable chair in the manner of one who had the right to his room at any time.

"Where would you advise me to sit?" she asked. "I don't mean to criticise or carp when I say that this Holy of Holies of yours is more like the smoking room in a man's club than anything else. It fits your character like a glove, Pelham. But,— I need soft things and cushions, you know. Do what you can for me."

Franklin cleared a sofa of lines of fishing tackle and a double-barrelled gun and collected his only two cushions. "How will this do?" he said, showing no signs of his irritation and impatience at the sight of her.

She placed herself full stretch, worked the cushions into place with her white shoulders and heaved a little sigh of content.

She was too pleased with her lace stockings to hide them.

"May I smoke?"

"I beg your pardon," said Franklin. Good Lord, was she there for the night!

For some few moments she sat in silence looking interestedly about her, with a quiet air of proprietorship. She inhaled two or three mouthfuls of smoke and let it trickle out of her slightly Oriental nostrils. In her dark hair, that was drawn tightly across her forehead, the strange stone glittered. She made an attractive, if somewhat erotic, picture sitting there, so slight and so feminine in her white satin dress cut with impish ability to the very limit of decency.

Then she turned amused eyes on Franklin, who was standing watching her, trying to discover what was behind this obviously well-planned visit.

"All men are liars, saith the prophet, and you, my dear Pelham, very palpably hold a diploma in class A." She laughed quietly, rather pleased with her way of breaking the ice.

"Think so?" What on earth did the woman mean?

"You undemonstrative, self-contained men lie far more unsuccessfully than the Latins. One looks for a certain amount of duplicity from them. Their wine and climate and the quickness of their wits makes truthfulness almost impolite. Much the same point of view is held of the Irish, who have an inherent disbelief in the mere truth. The strong streak of Anglo-Saxon in you which gives you a horror of pulling down the fourth wall behind which you hide your sentimentality puts one off. What one takes for honest inarticulation and shyness is really a well-thought-out pose, isn't it? You manage admirably to give the impression of rather aloof integrity, an unexpressed contempt for dodgers. It is historical, all the same, how artfully you can live a double life and achieve a statue in the market-place."

This wordiness bored Franklin. He hated phrase-making. Also it was late and he wanted to go to bed to sleep and be healthy. "The prophet said another good thing," he replied. "Cut the cackle and come to the 'osses. Did you ever hear that?"

She laughed again. "You know that I have a horse or two then?"

"Would you be here if you hadn't?"

"Why shouldn't I have come for the pleasure of being with you, alone?"

"It's very kind of you to put it like that."

Mrs. Larpent flecked away the ash of her cigarette. "Sarcasm doesn't suit you," she said sharply. "If you mean to imply that I am here for money, you are wrong."

"I didn't mean to imply that," said Franklin. "On my honor."

"Thank you," she said, and was silent again. The conscientious beat of the engines made a sort of tune. Then she got up and faced him, dropping artificiality. "Why did you tell me you were married?"

"Ah!" thought Franklin, "it *is* that, then." He said nothing. He was no match for women.

"Couldn't you have been honest with *me,* of all people? You know my feelings for you. *I* was above board. Whatever the reason for hatching this extraordinary story I wouldn't have given you away. I would have helped you."

"I can't discuss this with you," said Franklin, "you were at the Vanderdykes. You saw the papers. Beatrix is on the yacht. There it is. I can't see any reason why you should say that she and I are not married."

"Can't you? Haven't I seen you together for the last three days? Wouldn't my eyes be the first to notice any sign of love or affection between you, or even toleration? I came on the yacht expecting to be made to suffer the jealous agony of the damned and I find,— it's easy enough,— that this honeymoon is a farce. You are a bachelor entertaining two duly chaperoned women."

What could Franklin do but lie? "Beatrix is my wife," he said, "and the way in which we treat each other is our affair."

"Oh, no, believe me," said Mrs. Larpent quickly. "That's where you're wrong. I am in this. You

were on the verge of loving *me* before Beatrix cropped up. You may decline to accept this as a fact but I tell you that you were, and I know. You stand there looking at me in amazement because I am not afraid or ashamed to tell the truth. Women are more or less a mystery to you and you've got a rooted idea that we must go through life hiding our souls behind light laughter and lace veils. And so we do until the inevitable hour when we come out into the open to fight for love. This is *my* hour, Pelham, and I stand in front of you as common and as human as a peasant woman or a squaw."

Her voice shook with emotion and she seemed to Franklin to be taller and more beautiful and more dignified than he had ever seen her. All the same he wished to Heaven that both these women had never come into his life, that he were still a free agent, a mere sportsman, as Beatrix called him so scornfully, the captain of his fate.

"I don't like your talking like this," he said, with a curiously boyish bluntness and awkwardness. "It isn't fair to yourself — or me."

"I'm not thinking altogether about you to-night, my dear. I said that this is my hour, my fight, the moment when I let you see me as I am. Now listen. I overheard your quarrel with Beatrix on deck this afternoon. I deliberately eavesdropped. I don't want to know why you and she are playing this queer game. It doesn't interest me. From the way you kissed her, without loving her in the very least, I saw that what you want is what I want. You are free.

I am free. We neither of us owe allegiance to a living creature. I love you. You are the first man who has made me understand the pain and ache of love. I make no bargain. I ask for no bond. I just want you. Take me."

She held out her white arms, with her head thrown back and her lips slightly parted and her eyes half closed. There was something utterly simple and in a way fine about her. It wasn't so much an appeal that she made as an offer of fellowship. Nature spoke in her voice and stood alluring in her presence.

Perhaps because of the subtle sense of isolation that the open sea gives, or of the wonderful silence of the night, or of the overwhelming strength of her desire, Ida Larpent was nearer sincerity in what she said than she had ever been. It wasn't only because she saw a chance to catch Franklin on the rebound that she had gone into his room. She had argued in cold blood that by becoming his mistress she would strengthen her position, put a claim upon his sense of honor and win her way to independence. But under the stress of genuine emotion these sordid calculations lifted like hawks and left her a woman in love, a very woman.

Franklin proved that he was very much of a man. To him love and its rewards were only good if they were won by fighting. They were the spoils of the chase. This inversion of the old right way was distressing, chilling and rather indecent. What to say and how to say it left him wordless. He would rather have found himself facing a lion with two empty barrels. Then he told the truth. "You're very

kind," he said. "But I love Beatrix and I'm going to be true to that."

Ida Larpent dropped her arms. Just for an instant the supreme mortification of being turned down put a red mist in front of her eyes. She could have fallen upon Franklin and struck him again and again. Then the sense of self-preservation came to her rescue. Her cunning returned and with it the vista of a doubtful and tricky future. She hid her disappointment and humiliation and impatience behind a perfect piece of acting and told herself that, after all, Franklin was difficult and different because he was a sportsman. She held out her hand and said, in a very sweet voice, "I love you. You know where to find me when you need a friend," and went away quickly before she might be moved to spoil the effect of her lack of drama. She believed that in this way she would win a warm place in Franklin's esteem,— the first step to the goal that she intended to gain by hook or crook,— and she was right.

XXII

Beatrix slept too late the following morning to take her usual exercise in the gymnasium. She was called at eight-thirty by Helene, who dared not give her less than half an hour in which to get ready for breakfast at the luxurious hour of nine. It was a delicious morning, with the sea in a very gracious mood, the sky blue and cloudless and a gentle breeze which brought the taste of salt to the lips.

Waking after a dreamless night, Beatrix found the sun pouring through the portholes of her state-room, caught the infection of health and high spirits, sprang out of bed, gave the sturdy Breton a cheery word, went into the bathroom and alternately sang and whistled one of Jerome Kern's catchy little tunes,— while the French girl gave thanks. The world was worth living in when her mercurial mistress found it so — otherwise death held many charms.

It was an easy matter to dress Beatrix for the morning,— a white silk shirt with a turned down collar, a grey-blue jersey cloth skirt with stockings to match, white shoes with brown strips and a man's tie of blue and white. In these she stood in front of a glass and turned about in careful examination before throwing a little smile of congratulation at herself and her handmaiden. "I don't give a single whoop what the fool

fashions may ordain, Helene," she said, "the too short skirt is for Coney Island only and makes women look either comic or pathetic, according to their weight. See that I never have anything shorter than this, won't you?"

Murmuring a suitable reply and blessing her patron saint for the good day, Helene opened the door and Beatrix passed out, touching the girl's cheek with the tips of kindly fingers. "We go ashore to-day," she said, "I will let you know when to pack."

Ah, there was, then, a fly in the amber! Helene gave one of those exquisitely eloquent gestures, that are peculiar to the Latin race, and sat down suddenly, her eyebrows almost lost behind her straight cut fringe. "What a life!" she said, addressing the whole suite. "Joost as we settle and tink to breathe, — up and away. Joost as Mistare Jones breaks his Engleesh ice,— we go. I leave a republic and come to a democracy and I fall into the entourage of a monarch!"

From which it will be seen that Horatio Jones had been playing the sailor again.

And then Beatrix went into the stateroom of Mrs. Lester Keene. "Why, Brownie dear, what's the matter? Have you had a bad night?"

The little lady was sitting up in bed in an early Victorian white linen night dress with a discreet touch of lace about the high neck. Her mousey hair was still done for the night and contained several long brown kid curlers about her forehead. Her face was pale and a little petulant as of one who has a griev-

ance. She might have been one of Cruikshank's drawings come to life.

"I heard every hour strike until five," she said, "and my neuralgia very nearly made me scream."

"Oh, you poor dear old thing. I *am* sorry! Why didn't you come and call me? I don't know what I could have done but at any rate I could have listened to your tale of woe and it always does one good to keep someone else awake when one can't sleep, doesn't it?"

She bent over the devoted companion and put her head gently against her breast as if it were the head of a child.

"Oh dear, oh dear," whimpered Mrs. Keene, "I shall never be able to get up in time for breakfast and I do so hate being unpunctual."

"Don't worry, dear little Brownie. I tell you what. You and I will have breakfast here. Shall we? I want to talk to you about a most important thing and afterwards you shall have a little sleep and then Helene shall dress you. What do you say?"

"Dear Beatrix, you're very kind. I should like nothing better, but——"

"Don't but. No sooner said than done," and Beatrix rang for a stewardess. "Now, here are your dressing gown and slippers. Jump,— that is, struggle out of bed and I'll have you all ready by the time breakfast comes."

Mrs. Keene's attack of neuralgia had been very painful. She had really heard several hours slip by, but, for the pleasure and ego-warming of having Bea-

trix wait upon her and say kind things she would most willingly have undergone twice the pain and almost total sleeplessness. Beatrix knew this. Without conceit or the smallest suggestion of inflated vanity, she was aware of the fact that she was making her little old friend and flatterer quite happy. Her training among sycophants had made her an expert in playing upon the feelings of those about her. The unbelievable and unhealthy wealth which had placed a golden halo round her head had cultivated in her the gift, peculiar to Royalty, of dealing out easily given favors, little acts of kindness which bound her subjects more closely. This dangerous knowledge acquired as a child made her as dexterous in striking answering notes as though she were a professional pianist. Her instrument was temperament and she was a past-mistress in reading character.

The stewardess took the order, hurried to carry it out, and presently found "Mrs. Franklin" arranging her companion among many cushions on a sofa near the table. A message had been sent to the major-domo that the two ladies would be absent from the dining-saloon.

"Well," said Beatrix, pouring out tea, "well, Brownie, and how do you like the sea?"

Mrs. Keene had removed her curlers and so had regained her sense of propriety. Curlers somehow stood to her as very intimate things. She felt in them as most nice women do when they are caught by men with their hair down. "My dear, I shall never be anything but scared to death away from land. This

is a very beautiful yacht, of course, with every modern convenience and invention, but I dread to think what might happen to her in a storm. I am sure that I shall not be well again until I put my foot on solid earth."

Beatrix gave a rather excited laugh. "Then you will be well again this afternoon," she said.

Mrs. Keene turned eagerly. "You don't mean that we are going to land, that this dreadful cruise is coming to an end *this afternoon?*"

"Oh, yes, I do."

"But, Mr. Franklin? Has he ——?"

"Mr. Franklin doesn't count in the scheme of things," said Beatrix coolly, "I've made up my mind to get off the *Galatea* and there it is."

Mrs. Keene's first flush of pleasure and relief faded before her next thought. "But your Aunt Honoria and Mrs. Vanderdyke,— what will they say?"

"Everything that human beings can find to say and then some, my dear, but I don't think I shall go home at once," said Beatrix airily. "This seems to be a good opportunity of seeing a little of our United States,— of which I only really know Fifth Avenue. I think I shall get a good touring car, take Ida Larpent and we three will go for a joy-ride. That will give me time to think out a plan of action. It goes without saying that I shall have now to blow the gaff before Franklin does. There will be a certain amount of satisfaction in getting in first. After that,— well, my dear little long suffering Brownie, Aunt Honoria will lead the family against me and

unless I can get a really splendid brainwave you and I will go into exile to gloat, like Napoleon, on our brilliant misdeeds,— martyrs on the altar of adventure. And I don't mind telling you in strict confidence that all my courage oozes away at the bare idea. I've been an awful little fool, Brownie, there's no getting over it."

To her great surprise, Mrs. Keene felt a curious glow of reckless triumph in being included in Beatrix's wild scheme. Even she, almost the last living representative of the mid-Victorian era, had become used to this sham marriage. Modernism is strangely infectious. All the same an overwhelming curiosity sent personal comfort into the cold and summoning up all her courage she put a question that had begun to burn her like a mustard plaster. "What has happened?" she asked. "Have you had further trouble with Mr. Franklin? Has he tried ——"

Beatrix lifted a cover from a dish. "Try some of these delightful looking scrambled eggs, Brownie dear. I've heard they're very good for neuralgia."

A little flush suddenly swept over the elder woman's face. She had taken advantage of the princess's condescension and received as usual a well-deserved snub. Greatly to her relief — she had an inherent dislike of apologizing — Ida Larpent sailed in, looking like a French actress on a holiday.

"May I come in?" she asked, a little too late. "I was anxious about you, dear child, and so was Mr. Fraser."

Beatrix got up. She was not amazed at Mrs.

Keene's curiosity. She sympathized with that. She felt it incumbent upon her, however, to register disapproval for the sake of the future. "You're both very kind," she said. "There's nothing the matter. Come to the library. Send for Helene as soon as you're ready to dress, Brownie, won't you? Au revoir." She nodded, took Mrs. Larpent's arm and went out.

Poor little Mrs. Lester Keene. When *would* she remember that she was in the service of plutocracy!

"How would you like to break the monotony of cruising by coming on a motor tour?" asked Beatrix. The sun set her hair on fire.

Mrs. Larpent shut the library door quickly. "But, how do you mean? Is Mr. Franklin going to bring the cruise to an end?" She also had decided upon a plan of action,— and the scene of it was the yacht.

"No," said Beatrix laughing, "but I have. I'm going ashore this afternoon with Mrs. Keene and Helene."

"Ashore — this afternoon?"

"Why not? There's no reason why you shouldn't be the only woman on board, I suppose. It's a free country. But if you'd care to come with me, do. We may have some fun."

"Thanks most awfully," said Ida, trying quickly to make order out of chaos. "Yes, we ought to have great fun. I don't know much of America." But what would Franklin say? Would he let her remain alone on the *Galatea?* If that could be worked the rest seemed easy. But it would mean, she knew, breaking

with Beatrix, who was, of course, an asset. It was the choice between a good thing and one that might be made of incalculable excellence. Mentally she plumped for Franklin, her knowledge of men and her confidence in herself and her beauty. "Have you told Mr. Franklin yet?"

"Yes, vaguely," said Beatrix. "But as I haven't the faintest idea where we can land I'm on my way to see him now and clinch the matter. I don't think there will be too much time to pack. Be in the gym in half an hour and let's have some exercise." She turned at the door and a smile lit up her face. "It'll be a tremendous joke cutting about the country without any man to look after us. Four lone women on the long trail? Why, we shall *ask* for trouble."

Her merry laugh remained in the room and Ida Larpent added a chuckle to it. "Enjoy your joke, my child," she said to herself, "but count me out. If I have to work a miracle I'll stay on the yacht and in good time, with ordinary luck and great tact, I may have something to laugh at too."

XXIII

FRANKLIN was in his room talking to the Captain about a fishing expedition when Beatrix knocked at the door.

"Come in . . . and if we lie at anchor for a couple of days we can ship some grub on the big launch . . ." He stopped on seeing Beatrix, who stood framed in the doorway, the most bewitching picture he ever hoped to see.

"Am I disturbing you? . . . I'll come back presently."

"Oh, no, please!" said Franklin. "We've finished."

Beatrix had no intention of leaving whether she disturbed or not. "Good morning, Captain," she said. "What a wonderful day!"

"Good morning, Mrs. Franklin. It's good to be alive in such weather, isn't it? . . . Very good, sir. I'll see about the fishing trip at once." He picked up his cap, dropped the ash of his cigar into a silver tray, bowed to Beatrix and took himself off, wondering for the hundredth time what sort of marriage this was in which these two young people treated each other as though they were casual acquaintances.

"Won't you sit down?" Franklin pushed an armchair forward.

"No wonder you like this room," said Beatrix. "May I wander round for a moment? How jolly

these Yale groups are, and I see you play polo,— the only game that makes me wish I were a man. And what's this uniform? The National Guard?"

"Yes, I hold a commission."

"I didn't know that. Very versatile, aren't you? And that's a tarpon, isn't it? What a big fellow. Probably gave you some trouble."

"About four hours," said Franklin. Good Lord, what was this extraordinary girl made of! Yesterday she had fought him like a tigress, to-day she was as sunny and calm as the weather.

She sat down on the edge of a table, pushing back a box of cigars and half a dozen well-smoked pipes. "I've come to have a little friendly talk," she said, "if you can give me ten minutes."

"I'm absolutely at your service."

"Thanks. Don't stand there. It makes me feel formal. And please go on smoking." She gave him one of those smiles that made obedience a delight. "That's better. I want to tell you that, except for one incident, I shall look back on these days on the *Galatea* with real pleasure. You're sorry that you committed assault and battery, aren't you?"

"Very sorry," said Franklin. What else could he say with those frank laughing eyes upon him.

"Yes, I'm sure you are. I was too, but will agree to forget, because otherwise you've been so nice and kind."

Franklin bowed. He knew that he was a fool, but he felt that she had decorated him with an order. What was behind all this?

Beatrix threw back her golden head and burst out laughing. "I'll tell you," she said, reading his thoughts on his face. He had not troubled to become socially expert in disguising his feelings. She got up, ran one of the bachelor chairs near to Franklin, sat down and bent forward. Artificiality, self-consciousness and that touch of the precocious that she took an impish pleasure in adopting in a crowd, all left her. "Look here," she said, "I'm going to be very honest with you, for a change. Can you bear it?"

"Go ahead," said Franklin, boyishly. It seemed to him that he was looking at and sitting close to a new girl,— the girl described to him by Malcolm in that emotional outburst of his.

"I'm awfully, really awfully sorry I played the fool and let you into all this, Pelham. I took a horrible advantage of you and I'm beastly ashamed about it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Franklin, who would willingly have gone through it all again to be treated so charmingly.

"You say that because, at this moment, you and I are friends and have put our cards on the table, but I know jolly well that I've given you a very bad time and have got you into a hateful mess."

"That's true enough," he said. "But why not fall in with the only possible plan to put us both out of it?"

"You mean marry you?"

"Yes." He did his best to hide his eagerness.

She shook her head, and put her hand lightly on

his arm. "My dear man, I can't. It isn't fair to you. I think it's, well, immense of you to have thought of it but I draw the line at divorce. If you had to go through all that horrid business I'm perfectly certain it would be on my conscience all my life."

Franklin saw his chance to put up a bloodless fight. "But why should there be a divorce?"

"I don't follow you," said Beatrix.

"Let's be married for the sake of everybody concerned and remain married."

Beatrix looked at him squarely and bravely. "I'll tell you why not," she said, after a pause. "Deep down somewhere in me there's a little unspoiled fund of romance and sentiment. I'm looking rather wistfully forward to marriage as the turning point in my funny life. I want it to be the best thing that I shall ever do. I want it to be for love."

"And you don't think that you could ever love me?" asked Franklin, trying to keep his voice steady.

"No," she said, simply, "I don't. And what's more, I'm not your sort of girl, I know that perfectly well."

"Speak, you fool, speak!" cried Franklin inwardly. "Get off your stilts and lay yourself at her feet and give up this crazy idea of breaking her splendid spirit and blurt out that you love her to desperation and would gladly go to the devil for her."

But the moment passed,— one of those innumerable moments in life which, if instantly seized, turn pain into joy, misunderstandings into complete agree-

ment and are capable of changing the destiny of nations.

Beatrix got up and went back to her place on the table among the pipes. "No," she said, with an involuntary sigh, "I've still to meet the right man and you the right girl. We mustn't smash our lives because I've dragged you into a perfectly inconceivable muddle,— and that's putting it mildly. No, I've got to face the music and take my punishment, much as I hate it."

Franklin kept his ego away from her. Her frankness, her childlike simplicity beat him just as badly as her imperious moods. His pride, and the knowledge that she would laugh at him if he confessed himself, made it impossible to speak. But she tempted him almost beyond endurance. He had never loved her so much as he did at that moment. "Well," he said, "what do you want me to do?"

Beatrix laughed softly. "How extremely nice you can be when you try," she said. "When you fall in love I hope the girl will be a real corker."

"Thanks very much," said Franklin.

"I'll tell you what I want you to do. Run in this afternoon and put me ashore, will you?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. I've thought it all out. I shall get a car,— two cars, one for the baggage,— and go for a short tour. While I'm on the road with Mrs. Keene and probably Ida Larpent, I shall write as short a letter as possible to mother,— whew, the mere thought of it makes me hot all over,— and give her the truth,

the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Then, one fine day, I shall walk in upon the family and give myself up to justice. Aunt Honoria has the very jolly idea of taking me into exile for a year during which, I suppose, she is optimistic enough to think that I shall 'find' myself. What I shall really do during that appalling time will be to write the confessions of a spoilt girl for the use of millionaire parents."

"It will make good reading," said Franklin.

"I'll see that it does," said Beatrix a little grimly. "One chapter, at least, will have a scathing attack on the sycophancy of the fashionable girls' school." She held out her hand. "Thank you again, Pelham Franklin, sportsman, for all you've done for me. I shall never forget."

Franklin sprang up and faced her. He was beaten then. He was to fail in breaking in this amazing girl. He was not the man marked out by fate to find the woman in Beatrix, to be the cause of her abdicating a sham throne, to give that good woman Aunt Honoria the longed-for opportunity to offer praise to God. Right. He would take his beating.

He grasped her hand. "You're sure you can be ready to land this afternoon?"

"Quite."

"Very good. I'll make it so. Mrs. Larpent will go with you, of course."

"Just as you like. And Malcolm?"

"Yes. I'll try being alone for a change." He let her hand go and stood back, waiting for whatever she might do or say next.

Beatrix laughed again. She rather liked the queer boyishness of this man, the awkwardness, the inarticulation; and it flashed across her mind as she looked at him, strong and clean-cut and sun-tanned, that there might perhaps have been a different conversation if he had not bent over the end of her bed and rapped out the offensive words that were rooted in her memory.

"Well, then, I'm off to the gym," she said, "for the last time. How happy you'll be to be rid of women."

And out she went, as graceful as a young deer.

XXIV

Franklin locked his door.

He knew very well that within ten minutes Ida Larpent would be upon him and that inevitably, being told by Beatrix of the latest move, Malcolm would be down to see what he could do. He had no wish to see anyone at that moment, not even his best friend.

He quietly loaded and lit a pipe, sat down in his favorite arm-chair, shoved his hands into his pockets and his long legs out and settled down to think. He hadn't done such a thing since the night of his father's death when for the second time in his young life grief had seized him by the throat and there did not seem to be one speck of light on his black horizon.

He went back to the night in New York, which was still within easy reach, when he and Malcolm had caught sight of Beatrix and Sutherland York. He was then his own master, heart-whole, a complete individualist, in the almost uncanny position of being free from responsibility, at the beck and call of no living creature. He was then one of the very few men in civilization who was able to go through life unattached either to a business or a cause. He was able to buy almost everything that caught his fancy. The one thing that all the money in the world cannot purchase he was lucky enough to possess. He had health. He was sound in wind and limb.

He followed himself into his antler-hung studio and

stood again looking round its crowded walls, suddenly and for the first time impatient of his games, realizing that his toys were empty and meaningless. Malcolm's surprising outburst about Beatrix rang again in his ears. He remembered that it had drawn from him a sort of prayer. "My God," he had said, "I wonder when *I* shall begin to live!"

Then he went over the ground from New York to the Vanderdyke House in the new car which had provided him with a momentary thrill. He had gone reluctantly because his interest in meeting Ida Larpent again was not keen. Their friendship had been very pleasant and agreeable but it had served its purpose. And then he saw himself, the super-individualist, as sceptical of Fate as all young men are, come down into the hall to be met by Beatrix with her urgent plea for help.

Without hesitation or motive, without thought or fear of consequences he had given his help and in an instant had lost his detachment, his splendid isolation, and rendered himself liable to responsibility, signed on to life's roll-call as the slave of a cause.

The amazing irony of it all only came to him in its utter nakedness as he sat there, locked into his own room, summing up the subsequent rush of events. In one careless moment he had flung his freedom away for the girl in whom he had never been able to squeeze up any sort of interest, the girl who had been the unconscious cause of his discontent and self-disgust, the girl to whom he had intended to give the spurs, who had set the torch of love to his breast and who was

now to be allowed to go free and unpunished merely because she disarmed him with a smile.

He got up and walked about.

It might be that what people call Fate,— he was vaguely inclined to believe that their word for it was not the honest one,— had suddenly, in the multiplicity of its daily work, become interested in his particular case and in that curious and almost ineradicable way, given him a very good reason for beginning to live,— or was it one of the haphazard incidents that come into the lives of human beings from out of the clouds, not in the nature of tests or trials, but as mere accidents out of which to shuffle in the best possible manner?

He drew up short.

What was going to happen if he let Beatrix go? Her name and his, her family and his own, would be the centre of such a scandal as the papers had not been able to batten upon in his memory. That mattered. He liked and respected the Vanderdykes. He was intensely jealous of Beatrix's good name. He valued his own and detested publicity. He didn't care whether it would be a good thing for her character for Beatrix to spend a year out of the stir, excitement and flattery of society. He loved and wanted her. He would be half content if he could bring her to the point of common sense and make her his wife in its mere empty meaning. That step achieved there were others that might lead to the fulfilment of his incessant dreams, if not through love then through tolerance and the acceptance of things.

Fate or accident, was he going to permit this wilful, nimble-minded, imperious girl, this child spoiled by a system, to make a fool of him again? "No, she shan't," he said. "I'll put up another fight and break her by other methods. We'll both begin to live and face things. I'll see this through."

He threw out his arms and took a deep breath, unlocked his door, went on deck, saw that the chairs were empty under the awning and made for the gymnasium. As quick as lightning he had made his plans.

There was Ida Larpent, introspective and calculating, in one of her most artful dresses and a soft wide-brimmed hat, sitting on a rolled-up mattress, with her gleaming fingers interlocked. There was Malcolm Fraser, in white flannels, with rounded shoulders and head bent forward, riding a fixed bicycle for dear life with his eyes on the dial in front of him,— and there, in blue knickers and a silk shirt with wide open collar was Beatrix perched straddle on the electric horse, with her hands on her hips, riding like a cavalryman. Her eyes were dancing, her lips parted and her face alight with health.

"Hello, Pel," she cried out, "here we are. Get into whites and come and show us the way on the bars."

A wave of sheer honest passion flooded Franklin's brain. Assuredly he would fight and go on fighting to win this girl.

Malcolm staggered off the bicycle. "Never was so glad in my life of an interruption," he said, panting. "This is not a poet's job."

And Ida Larpent rose slowly and touched a button on Franklin's coat. "Come out and talk to me," she said, under her breath.

Franklin went into the middle of the gym. "I'm not staying," he said. "I just came to say, Beatrix, that the launches will be ready at three-thirty. Can you be packed by then?"

"Oh, yes," she said, breaking into a gallop. "Too bad to have to go, isn't it?"

"Go? Go where?" asked Malcolm, staring at Franklin.

"Ashore, old man. Beatrix is sick of the *Galatea* and is taking her party off the yacht this afternoon."

"Her party?" The words came sharply from Mrs. Larpent.

"Her party,— yes," said Franklin, "so sorry," and he gave her a little bow which permitted of no argument.

Malcolm was staggered. "Meaning me,— too?"

"Naturally, my dear fellow," said Franklin. "The ladies must have a man to look after them. Don't forget, three-thirty."

The first officer was on the bridge. Franklin made for the Captain's state-room. McLeod, in his shirt sleeves, with a pipe between his teeth, was reading a magazine.

"Don't move," said Franklin. "Just listen. Make a beeline at once for the nearest place where my wife and her friends can be put ashore. Then have the big launch ready. Load it with all the luggage except my wife's. Have hers ready to dump into the other

launch, but don't lower it. Put Jones in charge and get Mrs. Larpent, Mrs. Keene, Mr. Fraser and the French maid into the launch. As soon as she's well away, the first officer will take a signal from me to pass on to you on the bridge. I'll raise my right hand above my head. He will do the same. That will mean full steam ahead and out to sea. Jones will land his party and come after us. Is all that clear?"

"Quite clear, sir, thank you!" said the Captain.

"Good," said Franklin.

As one man left the state-room the other got up and put on his coat and cap. There was a smile of approval on his face as he did so. "A very pleasant idea," he thought, "to run away with one's wife."

XXV

Lunch was a strange meal that day.

Mrs. Larpent was angry. Her plans lay all about her feet like a pack of cards. If there was one thing she resented more than any other it was to be coerced. The cruise might have been so useful. In his present state of mind, as she wrongly judged it, she had seen a way to bind Franklin to herself more closely than it had appeared possible in her most optimistic moments. She had been jarred by what Beatrix had said that morning as to going ashore but had determined to make a huge effort to remain aboard. Franklin's attitude in the gymnasium, however, made it quite plain that he did not want her. She was to go with the rest. It was the most bitter disappointment of her life. Her heart as well as her pocket was hurt, and both needed comfort. It required all her courage to enable her to play up to Beatrix's incessant light-heartedness during the meal.

Mrs. Lester Keene made very little attempt to disguise her joy at her impending release. Her own personal comfort came in front of her anxiety as to what must happen to Beatrix.

Malcolm Fraser was worried and puzzled. His sympathy was equally divided between his friend and the girl he loved. The cruise, which he hoped would bring them together, was a failure. Propinquity and

sea air had refused to work for once. He was intensely sorry. He was in the dark as to what had happened but he knew that Franklin was hard hit because he wanted to be alone. It was a sure sign. He refused to ask himself what was going to happen. There must be trouble and scandal and heart-burnings and probably punishment and he regarded them all as the spoilers of life.

He knew enough of Beatrix to be certain that in leaving the yacht in this abrupt manner she intended to give herself up to her people and never see Franklin again if she could help it. What a pity!

Franklin was quieter even than usual, but there was something in his eyes that made Beatrix curious. Her quick observation missed nothing. Just before lunch came to an end she looked squarely at him, with a straight face and said, "You're going to begin to enjoy yourself now, aren't you?"

"By Jove, yes," he said, with a ring of sincerity in his voice which set Malcolm puzzling again.

And then the imp sat itself on Beatrix's shoulder. "I wonder you ever bothered to get married," she said, with a little laugh.

All eyes turned upon her. Her audacity was epoch-making.

"It isn't good for man to live alone," said Franklin quietly.

"But you agree with modern thinkers that married people need a holiday from time to time, is that it?"

"Something like that," he replied, showing his teeth.

Beatrix looked round the table. She saw the same expression on the faces of all her party. "When shall we all meet again, do you suppose?"

"The sooner the better," said Franklin, with that touch of old-fashioned courtesy that he must have inherited from his grandfather. "Let's make an engagement to dine together one night at Sherry's during Christmas week. There may be a good deal to talk about by that time."

"I'll be there," said Malcolm.

"And I," said Mrs. Larpent, who had already begun to set the machinery of her brain at work. Many things might be made to happen before Christmas.

"I shall have great pleasure," said Mrs. Keene.

"But, my dear Pelham," cried Beatrix, with mock amazement, "am I to be a grass widow all that time?" She got up before Franklin could find an answer. "Come along, Brownie. Let's go and see how Helene is getting on with the packing. Hope the stewardess is doing good work for you, Mrs. Larpent. Your lovely frocks need careful handling, don't they?"

Franklin waited until they had gone. Then he turned to Malcolm. "Come on deck, old man. You've got to know something."

They went forward and stood in the sun. The line of coast was much nearer than it had been for days. It needed no glasses to see its formation now and the yellow line of beach on which a good-tempered sea was breaking.

Malcolm leaned on the rail side by side with the

man with whom he had been at school and university and on many a long trip since. They had been as close as brothers, these two, with no secrets. They had looked into each other's eyes over camp fires in many places far away from the contentious hell of cities and had talked on far into the night of life and death and the great hereafter. They knew each other in and out, realized each other's good points and weaknesses. The everlasting loyalty of friendship that passes the love of women was theirs.

"I knew that you were not going to wind up this cruise, whatever has happened, without a yarn," said Malcolm.

"Not likely," said Franklin. "We don't do those things."

Malcolm waited while Franklin lit a cigar. Christmas was,— he jotted the months off on his fingers. There were six. A good place Sherry's. It ought to be a merry party. Beatrix would see to that,— if she were not with Aunt Honoria in exile.

"I kissed Beatrix last night," said Franklin abruptly. "I had to. She was in my blood. . . . You know her. She blazed. There was a quick spat out here after dinner. She ordered to be put ashore, called me some extremely well-deserved names and played bridge as if she were at peace with the world. Old man, she's everything you said she was and a whole heap more. I wish to God I'd never met her,— and thank God I have. . . . This morning she came to my room. I had no intention, by that time, of obeying her orders as if I were a chauffeur. I was

too damned angry. But she translated herself back into the simple kid that she was when you put her skates on and sat at her feet. She made pulp of me. I agreed to everything she asked. She was nearer liking me than I ever hoped she would be,— I suppose because she got her way so easily. It's a habit. When she'd gone I did some thinking. I don't know what will come of it,— probably nothing, because men don't hit women as they sometimes deserve. But I made up my mind to have another hard try to win her, to fight like the very devil to keep her and break her in. She got me into all this by a trick. Very good. I'm going to take a leaf out of her book. Two can play that game. You're going ashore with Mrs. Larpent, Mrs. Keene and the maid. I do myself the honor to escort my so-called wife as soon as the other launch is ready. It never will be ready. Do you get me? The *Galatea* puts out again with the honeymoon couple — alone."

Malcolm took a long breath. "Ah!" he said. "Now you're talking."

"Yes," said Franklin, bringing his hand down hard on the rail, "and now I begin to fight. You have a cat's eyes and see in the dark. You hear things that other people don't catch. When I tell you, standing here in broad daylight, that I believe I'm marked out to make this girl find herself, that it's for me and no other man to bring her out of her casing of stucco, you'll know that I'm not talking highfalutin; you'll understand. In other words,— I'm not much of a hand in using 'em,— I don't think all this is just an

accident. I'm going to try and carry out my job. D'you see?"

"I see," said Malcolm. "That's why I argued with her to come on the *Galatea*. Good luck, Pel, and when we meet at Sherry's in Christmas week — don't forget to let us all know the day — I hope to drink to Mrs. Franklin." He held out his hand.

"I hope to God you may," said Franklin, taking it.

"I hope so too if you wish it as much as all that."

They both turned. Beatrix had just come up, dressed for the land.

"Don't *I* shake hands with anybody?" she added whimsically.

"With me," said Franklin.

"And me," said Malcolm.

And she gave them a hand each and divided one of her best smiles between them.

XXVI

At half-past three Captain McLeod stopped the engines of the *Galatea* and the big launch was lowered. Under the supervision of Mr. Jones the baggage belonging to Mrs. Larpent, Mrs. Lester Keene, Malcolm Fraser and the French maid was loaded into her, leaving plenty of room for the passengers.

Beatrix came on deck to find everyone ready. Franklin met her. He looked as imperturbable as usual but his heart was going nine to the dozen. "You're not going with the others, if you don't mind," he said. "Your things shall be put into the smaller launch. I want to take you ashore myself."

"Highly honored," said Beatrix gaily. "Will all my baggage get into the other launch?"

"Easily," said Franklin.

"What a lot there is of it,— enough for a regular honeymoon!"

"Yes. I was thinking so. . . . Excuse me while I say good-bye to the ladies." He went over to Mrs. Larpent, giving a quick glance to see that the first officer was on the watch.

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Larpent, softly. "I hate leaving the *Galatea* — and you."

"Thanks. I'm awfully sorry too."

"I shall probably go and stay with friends at Southampton but a letter sent to my apartment will

be forwarded if at any time you make up another party and need a fourth for bridge."

"Oh, that's splendid! Good-bye then."

She held his hand, gave him a look that was intended to convey everything that she would have said if they had been alone,— and did,— and then went down, was handed into the launch by Mr. Jones in his best manner and took her place.

Beatrix leaned on the rail. "I wish I had a kodak," she called out. "You look like Lady Jane Grey."

Mrs. Larpent smiled up at her. "I feel like the devil, my dear," she said to herself.

Then Franklin gave his hand to Mrs. Keene. "Good-bye," he said. "I'm sorry you haven't had a good time."

"I can't honestly say that I have, but you've been extremely kind, Mr. Franklin. Thank you."

And once more Jones proved his right to be called a lady's man.

"You look more hopeful already, Brownie," laughed Beatrix.

"Well, so long, Malcolm."

"So long, Pel."

"You know where to find me."

"Right."

Malcolm sat next to Mrs. Keene to give her his moral support, and waved his hand to Beatrix. "You'll find us on the quay," he said.

"All right, Malcolm. Don't wander off till I come."

"Let her go," sang out Mr. Jones and away they went.

And then Beatrix turned to Franklin. "Thanks, once more," she said.

Franklin's heart was up in his throat. "I can bring them back with a shout."

She shook her head.

"A woman may always alter her mind."

"I'm not a woman yet."

"No, that's true."

She laughed. His set face was as amusing as his naïve remark. "Well, it was very jolly. I've got quite fond of the *Galatea*. *I* shall miss the sun coming through the portholes in the morning and all my exercise in the gym."

Franklin raised his hand high above his head. The first officer did the same.

"I ought to know where to find you with a letter," said Beatrix. "Probably mother may want a statement from you as soon as I let the cat out of the bag. Whew! Won't there be a row!"

She began to wonder why Franklin didn't answer. She saw that he was standing with his chin up and his shoulders squared and an amazing look in his eyes. Was it laughter, anger? "Why," she said, "we're moving! Or is it my imagination?"

"No, on we go again," said Franklin.

"But — what do you mean? On where? The other launch isn't lowered yet, and my things ——"

"Our honeymoon begins to-day," said Franklin.

For one instant Beatrix was unable to understand.

She saw her luggage unmoved, the launch away out of hail, the coast receding, she heard the strong beat of the engines, looked round at the first officer near the bridge, the sailors standing about, and Franklin ready to spring at her if she made a wild attempt to leap overboard. She smothered a cry of rage, stood for a moment in front of Franklin with blazing eyes and distended nostrils, and then going off at one of her sudden tangents,— beckoned to the first officer. She would show these men that she was game.

"As you see, I've changed my mind about going ashore. Will you please have my things taken back and tell the stewardess to unpack them. Thanks, so much."

The first officer saluted and gave orders. Several men moved smartly to carry them out. From the bridge the Captain watched the launch slide against the quay, and grinned as he imagined the utter amazement of her passengers at the sight of his vessel with her dignified nose turned seaward. A smart breeze, lively water, unclouded sun, a clear horizon,— what a picture the *Galatea* must make from the shore, he thought.

"A contemptible trick," said Beatrix, looking at Franklin as though he were a leper. Other things came to her lips, savage, unrestrained, white-hot things,— not another living creature would have dared to treat her like this, not one,— but the first officer was in ear-shot as well as some of the crew. Blood and breeding told and so with one of her most gracious smiles she turned and swung away, singing a little

song. Without a maid, without a companion, without a friend, she was a prisoner on this yacht-world, at the mercy of the man who had given her vanity an unhealing wound. Her one hope, her one most eager hope, was that she would reach the drawing-room before her tears could be seen.

Franklin watched her go. To his tremendous love was added pride and admiration. She had called him a sportsman, but what could he call her?

"A contemptible trick,— yes," he thought. "But this is my job. Fate has marked me out to make a splendid woman of this spoiled girl, and I'll do it."

XXVII

Mr. Jones, with half a smile playing round his elastic mouth, and an irresistible twinkle in his small, blue, nimble eyes, quickly overhauled the *Galatea,* saw the launch properly hoisted and reported to the first officer.

"Well, that was a little bit of orl-right," he said, rubbing his handkerchief round the wet leather-lining of his cap. "Neat, very neat."

"Did they say anything when they twigged the idea?"

The whole of Mr. Jones' cockney face puckered into a grin. "Yes, I don't think," he said. "The old hen cackled as if she had lost her pet chicken. A good little soul. I believe she'd 'ave took a flyin' leap back into the launch if Mr. Fraser 'adn't 'eld her."

"What about Mrs. Larpent?"

"Ma boy, the siren's langwidge under her breath would 'ave lit a pile of shavings. Oh, she's 'ot stuff, that Larpy, and no mistake. Personally, I'm bally sorry she's off. It was better than readin' a novel to watch 'er sittin' about with a social smile on one side of her face and a Board meetin' on the other. The way she was layin' bird lime for the Boss! Clever? Nor 'arf,—and, moreover, what a nice leg for a stockin', eh?"

The first officer nodded sympathetically. "Yes," he said, "you're right. What about M. F.?"

Mr. Jones mopped his forehead and ran his handkerchief round the inside of his collar. The afternoon was warm. "I only 'ad time to chuck one glance at Peter Pan," he said, giving Malcolm the nick-name by which he was known on board, "somethin' in his eyes puzzled me. I dunno, but he 'ad the look of a little feller who'd 'ad his finger caught in a door and didn't mean to say anything about it. Well, it broke the bloomin' monotony, anyway, and the boss 'as my warmest congrats. How did Goldie take it?"

The first officer rather resented this precocious but good-hearted person's love of nicknames. "Mrs. Franklin changed her mind," he said, with some stiffness, "and went along to the drawing-room singing."

"Um," said Mr. Jones, with a disbelieving sniff. "Nevertheless, she can 'ave me. I'd break my neck and die 'appy for one of them heart-twistin' smiles of hers. All the same I shall miss Frenchy, we were gettin' on fine. Well, such is life."

The two men separated, the first officer to relieve the Captain, Horatio Jones to go below for a cup of tea. Both intended to discuss the ins and outs of the affair in full detail later on. The whole ship's company was intrigued as to the odd way in which Mr. and Mrs. Franklin "went on." It was almost the one topic of conversation. For constant gossip a yacht easily rivals a suburb, an army post or a convent.

Franklin had carried a deck chair into the sun forward a little while after Beatrix had gone to the drawing-room, and he remained there reading Nicolls on "Big Game in Bechuanaland" for an hour. He

concentrated grimly on that delightful Irishman's account of his hunting expeditions, but not one word of several chapters reached his brain. Beatrix, Beatrix, Beatrix,— all the words became her name, on every page he could see nothing but her face and her slim, graceful, alluring figure. Questions as to what he was to do, to say, to think, rose out of the pages. Finally he shut up the book and, with an empty pipe between his teeth, sat gazing at the line of horizon which rose and fell, and built up a dream in which he and she went hand in hand as far as he could see. He was startled and brought back to the difficult task to which, like a sort of crusader, he had bound himself, by the voice of the deck steward. "Mrs. Franklin would like you to come to tea, sir." Mrs. Franklin! By Jove, he would sacrifice everything he had in the world if only those words were true. He got up, curious and eager, and went back amidships on the starboard side. In front of a wicker table Beatrix was pouring out tea while she talked to Captain McLeod. She had changed back into appropriate clothes and looked the last word in smartness in a black straw hat with a black and white ribbon, a suit of white flannel and white shoes with black toe caps. The reason that there was no sign of redness round her eyes or of swollen lids was because she had refused to give Franklin the satisfaction of seeing these things by shedding tears. No one would ever know the strenuous fight that she had put up, alone in the drawing-room, to achieve this end.

It gave Franklin a thrill of pleasure to see her sit-

ting there, so perfectly at home, so completely mistress of herself and the situation, and the smile of welcome that she gave him made him wonder whether he was not back in his dream.

"Captain McLeod has condescended to patronize the tea table for once, Pelham."

McLeod got up and placed a chair for Franklin. "Hardly that," he said, with her note of invitation in his pocket.

"Good for you, McLeod," said Franklin, tacitly agreeing with Beatrix that, under the circumstances, the presence of a third person made things easier.

"Lemon and one lump, isn't it?" She made it so.

Franklin was not surprised that she knew. He had proved the keenness of her observation.

"Captain McLeod, these are cheese sandwiches,—very nice."

"Thank you." The skipper was not much more a lady's man than his owner, although he had stumbled twice into matrimony, and he felt preposterously at a loss for small talk; but if, now that the guests had gone, the monotony of feeding in the mess was to be broken so pleasantly sometimes, he was glad. He had confided to the first officer days before that Mrs. Franklin was "the best-looking thing in girls that he ever wanted to see."

In the middle of her acting to play hostess to the two men who had obviously planned the trick that kept her on board and whom she hated for it, an uncomfortable glimpse of self-analysis told her that she

was rather enjoying the excitement and the stimulation of her effort and that her love of adventure and new experiences was being fully gratified. "You weird person," she said to herself, "what *are* you made of?" And even then her brain began to work on the germ of an idea that might lead to her escape. Jones might be bribed. Her blood began to dance at the thought of it. What joy to do the double on Franklin! "I don't mean to be unkind," she said, "and of course there can't be any more bridge unless Captain McLeod can be induced to play a three-some —"

"Indeed, yes, gladly."

"But it *is* a relief to be without Mrs. Keene, by way of a change, and the others. You must have the gift of second sight, Pelham."

Franklin said nothing, but he caught her eye and bowed to show her more eloquently than he knew how to express it in front of the Captain that he admired her pluck.

Beatrix caught his meaning. There were one or two good points about this man. But she sailed on and talked and laughed and said several charming things to the Captain that went well home. If Jones proved loyal or cowardly perhaps McLeod might be flattered into helping her to triumph over Franklin. It was as well to make friends, at any rate.

But all the while the coast line was growing more and more faint and the water between herself and the protection of the two women wider and wider. Well, her desire to see life had led her to this almost incon-

ceivable position, and she was certainly continuing to see it. There was some satisfaction in that.

It was only when the Captain had gone, and the deck steward had taken away the table, that silence fell. For a little while those two young people who had come together by accident remained sitting self-consciously, wondering what to say. Franklin hoped that Beatrix would re-open the question of his trick so that he could renew the old argument as to the all-round wisdom of marriage. It was the one burning subject of his thoughts. Beatrix sensed this and so determined to talk, if anything at all were said, of a hundred other things. She had no patience with his eagerness to escape from scandal at such a price. The silence remained, broken only by the unceasing throb of the engines, the swish of the sea and the song of the breeze, until finally Beatrix broke it. "Come over to the rail," she said, "and let's watch the sun go down."

Franklin followed her, everything in him blazing with love and the ache to touch.

All the west was draped with red, and the sun, conscious of having given great joy to the fading day, sank with the indescribable dignity of a beneficent monarch to his rest. Sky and water paid homage as he went and the very breeze seemed to hold its breath to watch the passing.

"Isn't it wonderful?" whispered Beatrix, touched with the beauty and magic of it.

"Yes," said Franklin.

"I often wonder how there can be skeptics in the

world with such a proof as this of the great Father. Don't you?"

"Yes," he said again.

"The sun, the moon, the stars, spring, summer, the fall,— everything so regular, so honest, so gentle, so awful, so human and spiritual and divine. Why look at anything but nature for a revelation of God?"

Franklin forgot the sunset and looked at this girl of many sides and moods. She had surprised him so often that he half-expected to discover in her expression the self-consciousness of a pose. Instead he saw the wistful, humble look on her lovely face that he had seen on the faces of French peasant women who, standing in the fields in which they worked so hard for a bare living, bowed their heads at the sound of the Angelus, and once again he was back in his dream with her hand in his, standing on the threshold of a home, listening with infinite joy to the laughter of little children.

It was not until the sun had gone and the last redness in the sky had faded that he heard her sigh, and saw her shiver a little and turn away.

XXVIII

They met again at dinner.

The chief steward, after giving the matter very considerable thought, had taken several leaves out of the table, thus making the happy pair "more cosy-like" as he put it. Beatrix and Franklin were equally glad to find that they were not going to sit in solemn state at the opposite ends of a long and narrow board. It would have added difficulty to a position already difficult enough.

Franklin had waited outside the dining saloon until Beatrix put in an appearance. The orchestra, with quite unconscious irony, was playing the Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla from *Das Rheingold*. The stewards were in their places. With an irresistible touch of mischief and her senses alive to the grim humor of it all, Beatrix laid her hand on Franklin's arm and went into dinner as though the saloon were a stage, and the curtain had risen on a crowded auditorium. She deliberately switched her mind into a belief that she was playing the part of a girl who had been forced by her family into a marriage of convenience with a man whom she hardly knew and that the scene in which she was to take part was comedy, one with an underlying note of tragedy in it. She told herself that she was required to portray a girl

of high courage and spirit who was to convey the impression of being perfectly at ease although her heart was full of fright. She did this in order to string herself up to go through an ordeal with pluck and to prevent Franklin from having the satisfaction of imagining that he was forcing her to do something that went against the grain. Not for one instant did she intend to let Franklin see how intensely she resented being compelled to remain on the yacht or permit him to feel that he was winning. As to that she had absolutely made up her mind.

Franklin was glad beyond words to fall in with her mood,— as he took it to be. Not being psychologically inclined he was unable to deduce the meaning of it. He simply told himself that she was fearless and daring and added these things to the credit list of her splendid points which was growing larger and larger. He led her to the table, placed her chair, sat opposite and looked at her over an arrangement of roses. She was in a white dress with a string of pearls round her neck,— a dress so simple and clean in its lines as to prove the hand of a master in its making. She sat with a straight back, her chin up, her golden hair shimmering. She reminded Franklin of a daffodil.

He utterly failed to find any answers to his questions as to what he was to do with her now that he had her alone, how he was to proceed to bring about the end that obsessed him, or in what way he could persuade or coerce her out of her supreme and all-controlling individualism. He was not one of those

curious men who, like Micawber, the master of the silly art of self-deception, drug themselves into a belief that all is well for the sake of wandering in a temporary paradise to which they have paid no entrance fee in the way of work and service. He was fundamentally incapable of indulging in that form of mental delusion which enables children to turn the floor of a nursery into a battlefield and slothful people with the artistic temperament to wallow in the triumph of a great achievement before they have even commenced to lay the foundations of it. He had the gift of seeing straight. He could find no point in looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. He was, in a word, honest. While, therefore, he delighted in seeing Beatrix playing the rôle of his wife so perfectly and enjoyed her almost affectionate manner and charming smiles he remained coldly truthful to himself and the position in which they both stood and realized that he was, if anything, farther away than ever from the fulfilment of what he had called his "job."

All through dinner Beatrix talked well and quietly about plays and books, as to which Franklin had very little to say. So with uncharacteristic tact she switched off to shooting and fishing and all was well. She liked hearing him give forth on his own subjects and was amused to find how much more he knew of the ways and habits of birds and beasts than those of women. She made up her mind to see what she could do with Mr. Jones as soon as possible.

The night was warm and windless. When Beatrix

rose from the table she went on deck and sat where she could listen to the orchestra. She asked the leader to play three pieces for her,— the strange mixture of which made him smile. They were Brahm's "Minnelied," "I Love a Piano," and "Lead, Kindly Light." Franklin, believing that she had had enough of him for the time being, went off to smoke a cigar with McLeod. As soon as the little band finished playing and went to dinner Beatrix walked aft to where, about thirty feet from the stern, a heavy canvas screen ran 'thwartships from one side of the yacht to the other, shutting off the deck space allotted to the crew. In this a fiddle and a mouth organ were playing one of those heavily sentimental vaudeville songs about home and mother, and several voices were harmonizing the air rather well. The owner of the falsetto with a pronounced tremulo Beatrix imagined to be a very tall, soft-looking, fat man with a beard which grew almost up to his eyes. She was right. He was the butt of the crew until he opened his mouth to sing. Presently the music changed to an Irish reel and Beatrix saw Horatio Jones with an almost smoked cigaratte in his mouth come out, as though drawn by a magnet, or the reed instrument of the Pied Piper, and with droll solemnity proceed, all alone, into an orgy of toe and heel with his back to her.

Seeing her chance Beatrix slipped nearer and stood smiling. "Very nice," she said, when the dancer wound up with a resounding double smack.

Mr. Jones was disconcerted, not in being caught in his ecstatic solo, which he was quite ready to repeat,

but because he had his cap on the wrong way round and was wearing his second-best monkey jacket. Being a complete lady's man he was naturally a conceited person and nothing put him out so much as to be taken unprepared. He grinned fatuously and put his cap on correctly.

"It must have taken a long time to become so proficient," she went on, giving him a dazzling smile.

"Oh, well, y'see, mam, my mother was a pro-dancer in her young days and I caught it from 'er, I expect."

"That's very interesting. Tell me about it, Mr. Jones." She began to pace the deck.

Jones fell in step, surreptitiously mopping his neck with his handkerchief. This was the moment of his life. During other cruises he had often had pleasant chats with Franklin and his friends who found him and his cockney accent rather amusing, but he had never hoped to do more than pass the time of day with this proud girl. He was on his best Sunday behavior.

"Me father went down to the sea in ships, the same as all me family," he said, with what he believed to be a certain amount of style. "At the time he met mother he was skipper of the *Princess Mary,* carryin' passengers from London to Margit, a seaside resort on the Kent coast of the old country."

"I know it," said Beatrix, who remembered without the least pleasure its ugly pier, stiff promenade, and heterogeneous mass of trippers.

"Is that so, mam? Ah, some little old place! I give you *my* word. Well, dad catches sight of mother sunnin' herself on deck and as he use ter say, she

stopped 'is watch, which is slang fer love at first glance. Bein' skipper and all like that naturally she was a bit bucked up when he spoke and asked if she was comfortable. That began it and instead of stayin' at Margit she made the return trip the next day, 'ad a fish supper along of father at the Anchor Hotel and was spliced up before the end of the week."

"Very romantic," said Beatrix, "and what then?"

"Well," said Jones, with a little laugh, "then there was me, the first of nine, and mother give up 'er terpsichorean career, so ter speak."

"But she taught you all to dance?"

"Yes, mam, and the last time I saw the old man was at a concert in aid of the orphans of seamen at Barking Creek and me and me brothers and sisters, with mother in the middle, give an exhibition of fancy dancin' and I wish you could 'ave seen the old man's face. He died shortly after that."

"I'm sorry," said Beatrix, wondering whether he meant from the effects of that evening.

"Thank you, mam, but he 'ad the satisfaction of seein' his five sons well placed at sea and his gals doin' fine business on the 'alls as 'The Four Delantys,' and very, very 'ot stuff too, I give you *my* word."

"How splendid. You must be very proud to belong to such a family. I'll get you to tell me some more about this romantic love match while we're out."

"Any time, mam, with pleasure," and then with great style the man, who was as good a sailor as he was a dancer, saluted. Evidently he was to be dismissed.

"Well, as I said before, she can 'ave *me*," he said to himself as pleased as Punch.

"Have you to be up early in the morning?"

"Yes, mam, five o'clock. We heave to for a couple of hours for me to go ashore with the mail and pick up the papers and magazines."

Beatrix nearly jumped out of her skin. He was going ashore! Here was her chance without taking this man into her confidence or bribing him to disobey possible orders. "I'll be up at five too," she said, trying to keep her voice steady. "You shall take me with you. Mr. Franklin has a birthday to-morrow and you solve the problem of how I can get something for him, as a little surprise."

"Very glad, I'm sure," said Mr. Jones.

"Good night, then. Be sure you don't go without me. I won't keep you waiting."

She was far too excited to go to sleep and lay for an hour making plans and already revelling in her triumph over Franklin. She had told the stewardess to call her at half-past four. It would be easy to telephone to the town where Brownie and Mrs. Larpent would have to spend the night and after all she would have her motor tour. She would leave the baggage on the yacht. What did it matter? Life was very good, — and her little lie about Franklin's birthday was brilliant!

She heard Franklin striding up and down the deck like a sentry. It made her feel even more like a prisoner than ever.

Only Franklin and the watching stars knew who was

the real prisoner, sentenced for life to a love that set a hitherto untouched heart into a great blaze.

The morning was dull and leaden and windless, the sea as flat as the palm of a hand. Dressed and ready in good time and wearing a most amazing smile, Beatrix slipped out of her stateroom and over to the port side. Mr. Jones was waiting in the small launch, talking to one of the sailors. She was going to escape from her floating jail, yes, escape. How she would love to be able to see Franklin's face when she didn't turn up for breakfast.

And then her arm was seized in an iron grip. "No, you don't. Believe me, no."

It was Franklin, with an overcoat over his dinner jacket. He had obviously not been to bed.

She drew up and tried to bluff. "I'm only going to ring up Mrs. Keene and tell her ——"

"Go back to your room!"

"But I must give her instructions as to what ——"

"Go back to your room, I tell you."

She stamped her foot. This man was unendurable, — and his hand hurt her arm. "What is all this? Do you suppose that I'm going to take orders from you?"

"Jones, get off," he shouted, "and don't hold us up longer than you need."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the dancing sailor, who wished he could have heard what had been said.

"As to taking orders from me, yes, from now on-

wards. Breakfast is at nine," and he gave her back her arm and turned away.

Beatrix put her hand over her mouth to gag a scream of anger. But she would make him pay for this, with the other debts. She would indeed. If Mr. Jones couldn't be worked upon again, there were the first officer and the Captain,— and they, unlike this cold-blooded bully, were men.

XXIX

It had been a queer day for Franklin.

Beginning with anger it gradually led him into a dozen other emotions,— a reluctant admiration for the cunning way in which Beatrix had been going to take advantage of Horatio Jones; amusement when she didn't appear for breakfast and he thought that she was sulking; loneliness when tea-time came and there was still no sign of her; finally fright, sheer, honest fright when he discovered at sun-down that she had not rung for the stewardess during the whole of the day.

He sent for the stewardess. "Why do you suppose Mrs. Franklin hasn't needed you?" he asked.

"I don't know, I'm sure, sir." The woman was evidently worried too. She fingered her apron nervously.

"When were you in her room last?"

"At half-past eight, sir."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, I called Mrs. Franklin at four-thirty this morning ——"

"Yes, I know."

"And I went in again as usual at half-past eight to see what I could do to help in any way and Mrs. Franklin had gone back to bed, sir."

"Go on."

"Well, sir, I hung about for a few minutes and then Mrs. Franklin half woke up and said: 'I'm tired, don't come again until I ring.'"

"You're quite sure she hasn't rung?"

"Yes, sir. I've never left my cabin,—had my meals brought there, sir, in case ——"

"I see. Thank you." He opened the door for the sturdy little woman who seemed to have caught his anxiety, and then killed the longest half an hour that he remembered ever to have spent. Was Beatrix *in* her stateroom? Had she by any chance got away? That was absurd. How could she with officers and crew about all day? Naturally she was tired, having been up so early, but why stay in bed for so many hours? Her vitality and love of movement, her constant desire to do things and take exercise, her homogeneous nature which led her to talk to all and sundry made it impossible for her either to wake or sleep for such a long time. She must be ill! Yes, that was it. She had fainted or done one of the queer things that he had heard of women doing. The stewardess must see her at once. Why? She was no use. For one thing she stood in awe of this girl who gave such definite orders and saw that they were observed. For another she was rough and untrained and probably incompetent and like all her countrywomen sensational. She might scream or something. . . . For Heaven's sake what was he to do?

With all his nerves jangling like a bunch of telegraph wires in a gale he went aft. The sun had gone. It was almost dark. One star had come up, the out-

post of the night. There was, he saw, no light in her suite. He stood at her door, irresolute, with the hand of fright on his heart. He was homesick for the sight of her and the sound of her voice, even if it should be cold and antagonistic, or mocking and scornful. He felt oddly and strangely young and lonely and worried, afraid of some intangible thing. Suppose she had done something ——

He couldn't bear the thought. He opened her door, shut it and went in and stood in the dark. It was the sitting-room. On the table in the middle there was a reading lamp. He groped about and found it and turned it up. There was a book on the floor, open face down, its leaves all bent under. It must have been flung there. A soft, black hat was lying up against the wall. It looked hurt. And everywhere there was the subtle influence of scent.

He went across to the bedroom door, hesitated, turned the handle and went in.

By the light from the sitting-room door, he could see the bed. The blankets had been flung back and under a sheet Beatrix lay, her cheek on one hand, the other soft and flaccid, palm-up, on the cover. A great fan of golden hair covered the pillow. She was lying on her side like a child with her knees drawn up and one bare shoulder gleaming.

The eternal yearning of Nature made Franklin want to cry out at the sight of her. He stood humble, inarticulate, bewitched. The room seemed to be filled with the sound of sweet, far-away voices.

He went forward and bent over her, listening to

her breathing. It was agony to be so near and so far away. After a moment she laughed softly and stirred like a waking flower and drew up her hand and moved it lazily as if trying to catch the figure of sleep that was turning to go.

He drew back quickly, panting.

"Is that you, Brownie dear? Oh-ho, I've had such a lovely rest. I've been lying all among buttercups and clover far, far away from the sea. It's good to be on land again and hear the birds sing and watch the grasses nod." She turned over and stretched and gave a long sigh and opened her eyes. Then she looked about astonished and sat up quickly, startled.

"Who's there?" Her voice was sharp and frightened.

"Me," said Franklin.

"You!" She put her hands over her breasts.

"I'm sorry. I thought you were ill." How tame it sounded!

"Ill? Why?"

"It's late and you haven't rung for the stewardess all day. I wondered if anything was the matter. So I came in. That's all. Can I do anything for you?"

"Only — go," she said.

And so he turned and went out and strode forward and stood hatless under the sky. Other stars had come. The line of horizon had become merged into the darkness. The breeze left the taste of salt on his parched lips. The eternal yearning grew in the si-

lence and the call of Nature seemed to echo through the world. Everything that was true and clean and honest in him answered to it. All his dreams as a boy and a youth, vague, unremembered; all the sudden, surprising elations that had swept over him at the sight, perhaps, of a priceless view of open country, the misty interior of an old Cathedral, the appeal of a throbbing melody, took shape and became the lovely body of that sleeping girl. He had never understood so definitely, so conclusively, so permanently, that in Beatrix was the epitome of all his hopes.

She dined in her own room that night and had breakfast sent to her in the morning. Franklin hung about near her stateroom in the hope of seeing her. He could hear her singing as he passed and talking to the little Irish woman, but at twelve o'clock there was still no sign of her on deck. He was just going along to the Captain's room in order to talk and be talked to when the stewardess came and gave him a note. He took it and blushed like a school-boy and carried it down to his own room.

It had no conventional beginning. It plunged straight to the point. "I'm not sulking, which would be human enough, or suffering from shock, which would be reasonable under the circumstances. I'm thinking and weighing things up. I've told the stewardess that I've got neuralgia so that the people of your small kingdom may not run away with the notion that their rulers have had a wordy argument. I may inflict myself upon you for lunch if by that time I have found the way out of my mental maze. If not, you

may be alone in all your glory for days,— weeks perhaps."

It ended as abruptly as it began.

Days,— weeks perhaps!

XXX

HAVING written the note, Beatrix proceeded to dress for lunch.

It was altogether a new thing to be without a maid and a companion. Never once in all her life, not even at school, had she been permitted to raise a finger for herself. Helene and Mrs. Lester Keene would have stood aghast and imagined that the end of the world was at hand if they could have seen her that morning doing her hair, putting on her shoes and choosing a frock. She did these things without assistance from the stewardess, who stood by impotent and uneasy, because she enjoyed the experience as a deviation from the regular routine of her life and found plenty to laugh at in her ridiculous inexpertness. It was a game and after her orgy of sleep she felt so electrically fit and vital as to be ready to play at anything, especially if it was new.

It was true that she had been thinking. Sitting like a tailor on her bed, with her hair in a flood about her shoulders, she had gone over the last two incidents of this queer honeymoon trip with great care. She was astonished, and even a little uneasy, to find that she was beginning to look at the whole business from a new angle. She discovered, after an honest examination, that the mere romantic side of this kidnapping

expedition, as she called it, no longer interested her, nor its unconventionality, either, although she chuckled to think of the mistaken complacency of her family in aiding and abetting Franklin to commit a breach that was without a parallel in the history of American society: It was enough to make a cat laugh. What it seemed to her to lack was the element of personal danger which had made the episode in her bedroom a very real fright. There was, it seemed to her, no red blood in the business, no flare of sex. Franklin was either the most cold-blooded man imaginable or a past master of the art of hiding his feelings.

This was what she wanted to find out. Her thinking led her up to the fact that her interest and curiosity were centered on this one point. She was perfectly frank in acknowledging to herself that her vanity was piqued. All other men, except Malcolm, who, after all, was not so much a man as a poet, had made it plain that they were men. Her femininity had triumphed. But with Franklin it was different. Was it possible that the more he was with her the less he was attracted? Here was something on which to concentrate and use her wits.

It was, therefore, with the excitement of having found something to do, a new game to play at, a new chapter to begin, that she dressed for lunch. The muddle in which she left her stateroom,— skirts that she had looked at, considered and discarded, stockings and shoes all over the floor, shirts and ties all chaotic in the drawers,— was a sight to see.

Only a few minutes late, she swung into the dining-

saloon, fresh and sweet, dancing-eyed and vital, ready to seize the first chance of putting Franklin to a new test.

He had none of the look of a man who had been up all night, tortured by a desire that had kept him pacing the hours away beneath a supremely indifferent moon. He had just come in from a swim. His body, having been exercised, was grateful and in fine fettle. His skin was burned a deeper brown. He was as hard as nails. He had not expected to see her, but from force of habit had waited in case she should come.

"Good morning," she said, cheerily.

"Good morning." He was cheery, too.

"You've waited for me, I see."

"Of course. I hoped you'd come."

"You say that as if you meant it."

"I do mean it."

"So bored that you can even put up with me?"

"I'm never bored at sea."

Her laugh rang out. "I gave you a perfect chance to say something nice," she said.

"I'm not much of a hand at saying nice things."

"I notice that."

Franklin let the challenge go. He had never felt it more necessary to keep a gag in his mouth. The things that were on the tip of his tongue to say were too primeval to put into words.

"Have you missed me?"

"We've all missed you."

"I asked if *you'd* missed me?"

"Yes."

"All right, my friend," she thought, "wait a bit."

She gave a nod and a smile to the stewards and ate with such excellent appetite that their efforts were well rewarded. The sun was cheerful, the saloon was cheerful, the stewards quick and willing, and Franklin, — yes, Franklin was certainly a very good-looking person. Bother the yacht, and her people and what had happened to Brownie, and the loss of a maid! Life was full of fun.

"The other day you said something about a fishing trip."

"Yes, I know."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, I'd arranged with McLeod to go off on the big launch for three days but ——"

"But what?"

"It's not much fun going alone."

Here was her first chance. "Take *me*," she cried, leaning forward. "I'd love to go. I've never fished, but you could teach me."

Franklin looked at her sharply to see if she were joking. But her expression was that of a child eager for adventure. "But the launch has no cabin," he said, "and we sleep under a hood hauled over her."

This was wonderful,— a test, indeed. She pressed the point eagerly. "Why not? I don't mind roughing it. I don't mind anything if it has compensations. Come out and talk it over."

Franklin followed her. She was leaning against the rail with the breeze in her hair and the sunlight on her

shoulders. What if he fell in with her impetuous wish? Jones and one of the crew would sleep, as usual, up in the peak and he and she must lie almost side by side under the awning in the stern.

"Please don't make difficulties," she said. "Let me have my own way just for once."

He could have yelled with laughter. Confound it, the girl was having her own way all the time, except in unessential things.

"There are various degrees of roughing it," he said, cursing his conscience.

"Yes, but if I don't mind,— if I *want* to?"

"Have a look at the launch, and then think."

"I'm tired of thinking. Arrange it,— please arrange it." She didn't want in the least to go, and she knew better than he did how absurd the idea was. But here was a chance to force him out of inarticulation, to see his self-composure crumble and break.

"Three days out. Hardly room to swing a cat. Two men with us ——"

Beatrix gave an impatient sigh. "I wish to heaven I wasn't a girl," she said, and waited expectantly.

It was no good. Franklin's hot words were choked back. He didn't know the Eden game that she was playing and would be hanged before he would give himself away to be laughed at.

And so the moment passed.

She walked up and down with him for an hour, laughing and talking. He was amazed to find that she was more friendly and charming than ever before and that her sleep seemed to have removed from her mind

all trace of resentment. "Let's talk young stuff," she said. "What we believe in, what we think we might do to solve all the problems of the world and all that, shall we? It's awfully good to get on a high horse every now and then and sweep away institutions with a phrase, knock down old laws with a well-aimed verb, and topple big men out of their places with the tip of a toe."

And they did so in the old-new way of youth, saying things earnestly, with the air of prophets, that had been labelled unpractical before they were born; letting their tongues run away with them as far as they could before they limped and halted; listening to each other with their eyes while getting the next outburst ready in their brains. And after awhile, as usual, they steered into personalities, likes and dislikes and mutual friends.

"And what do you think of Ida Larpent?" Beatrix asked suddenly.

"Very attractive, but ——"

"But better as somebody else's dinner partner?"

"Oh, no," said Franklin. "She made the average dinner bearable. She's in a class of her own,— beautiful, well-travelled, tremendously all there, and awfully good fun to take about."

"Take about?" Her eyebrows went up. "Did *you* take her about? But perhaps that's rather an indiscreet question?"

"Not a bit. When I was in town some months ago, bored stiff,— all my pals being away,— she was a real good sort and we did the rounds,— everything ex-

cept the Opera — which seemed to be having an orgy of Wagner, and I can't stand that over-exuberant German. I did a cycle of him once in London and it seemed to me that if he'd had the sense and honesty to scrap sixty per cent of his stuff there would have been enough over for two very decent operas. What do *you* think?"

She said something to keep the ball going but nothing of what she thought. So he could own to having been so attracted by Ida Larpent as to take her about night after night, but when it came to her, Beatrix, he could remain perfectly normal.

And again she thought: "All right, my friend, wait a bit." If she couldn't compete with Ida Larpent — good Lord!

But no, even under the rankle of this new thing, and even though she went to dinner that night in a mood as daring and devil-may-care as her dress and stood looking out at the star-bespattered sky for a long time with her arm through his, he remained brotherly. In fact, and in not seeing it her observation was uncharacteristically out of form,— her new delightful treatment of him made him very happy and contented. She was so charming and natural and breezy. She never once laughed at him or held him up to ridicule. He could almost persuade himself that they were really on a honeymoon, except when a whiff of scent bewildered his senses or the gleam of her whiteness made his heart tumble.

And so it went on for several apparently uneventful days,— days full of sun and health and simple con-

fidences, of wide, gorgeous views of sea and sky, of all the exquisite coloring of sunrise and sunset, and of the sweet singing of far-away voices. It was to bed that she took her growing pique; in the quiet of her own room that she asked herself, like the spoiled child that she was, what was the matter with this man. Under normal conditions, if they had been, perhaps, members of a house-party, she would have liked him extremely. He had greatly improved on acquaintance. He was something more than a sportsman. He had imagination, idealism, extraordinary simplicity and even a touch,— odd as she found it in his type,— of spirituality. It came out in his deep appreciation of Nature and love of melody. Why didn't he find *her* attractive,— even as attractive as Ida Larpent?

Only the nights were permitted by Franklin to see the strength of his desire, the torture of his passion; and these he killed and wore away by pacing interminably up and down, throwing himself on his bed finally tired out mentally and physically.

Very soon the game lost its novelty. Getting nothing to appease her vanity Beatrix gave it up. Once more the monotony of the sea bored her, the sensation of being tied by the leg got on her nerves. Franklin said a rather impatient thing one morning in reply to a sarcastic remark of hers and before she could stop herself and remember to stick to her pose of complete indifference she put her hand imploringly on his arm and burst into an intense and genuine appeal. "Well, let's end it," she begged. "Nothing can come of all this, nothing at all. You're only dodging the

issue, really you are. Don't let's play the fool any longer. The more you try to force me to agree to your plan the harder I shall fight. Don't you know me yet? I'm built like that. I can't help it. Oh, do be sane about it and come down to facts. We shall both grow old and grey on this prison ship because I'll never give in, never. It isn't that I don't think you're right. You are. I'll concede that. We ought to marry and settle the whole trouble. It's the easiest way. But I've said I won't, and I won't. I tell you I *won't*. I know I'm a fool. I know I'm pig-headed. I know I deserve to be made to pay. But you can't alter me now. It's too late. So let me off and I'll take my punishment and the whole thing will blow over. People's memories are short and every day, every hour other scandals come up, are talked about and forgotten. Pelham, will you please be good and let me go?"

All this came with a rush. Her voice was soft and winning, her eyes full of tears, her hand warm and sweet upon his arm. But every word that she said, every look that she gave him, every touch of appeal that came into her voice made her more and more valuable as the prize of his life, and the sight of her tears, especially the sight of her tears, steeled him to stick to his job to the very end. All her spoiling, all the falsity of her training, all the grotesque power of the wealth with which she had always been surrounded, had not completely changed her from the little girl whom Malcolm had painted in his never-to-be-forgotten picture, and of whom he had himself seen glimpses.

"No," he said. "I'm as pig-headed as you are. I

don't care if we do grow old and grey on this yacht. You've got to marry me."

Beatrix drew back. She was cold and angry and bitterly annoyed with herself for having asked once more for mercy. "All right," she said. "Then the fight goes on, and I give you warning that I shall use any weapons, fair or unfair, that I can find."

Before she could turn away and hide the marks of her tears, Captain McLeod came up. She smiled and gave him a cheery word. It was admirably and characteristically well done.

"McLeod," said Franklin quietly. "Tell Jones to get the big launch fixed up right away. He's to come with me on the fishing trip."

Beatrix left them to talk over the arrangements. What did she care where he went? He could go to the devil if he liked. She whistled as she moved away but her eyes were black with rage. This man who had the temerity, the impudence not only to stand up to her but to set himself to bend her to his will should see now of what sort of stuff she was made. Up to that very moment, in the face of everything that he had done, she had not cared to believe that this struggle of wills, this clash of temperaments, was worth taking with real seriousness. She had dodged it, laid it aside, treated it as half a joke, believed that if she really exerted herself it could be brought to a quick and definite end. She had not taken the trouble to rouse herself fully and set her wits at work to get away from the yacht. The pleasure of playing with fire was too great. She really had wished to see how far Franklin would go.

But now, having humbled herself again and been turned down, she went round another mental corner. Her interest and curiosity in the affair had come suddenly to an end. What did it matter in what way her family would presently revenge themselves? *This,*— this business,— was insufferable. To be dictated to, coerced, compelled, driven,— good Heavens, it was not to be endured. From that moment she would set herself to outwit him, humiliate him and laugh in his face. The work that she had begun with Mr. Jones in a half-hearted way would now, of course, count for nothing. He was going with Franklin. But there remained Captain McLeod and the first officer, and she would have three days. Revolutions had been brought about in less time than that, and she had smiled other men, including Franklin, into her service.

She went to the glass in her stateroom and rubbed away the marks of her tears with impatience and scorn. Then she stood back so that she could see the full length of her figure and took stock, measured herself up, made a cool and keen examination. Finally, having turned this way and that, she nodded at her reflection with approval. " Fair or unfair,— we'll see," she said. " There are the Captain and the first officer."

And then, smiling again and happy in having come at last to a conclusion, she changed into gym kit and in five minutes was perched up on the wooden horse, riding hell for leather.

XXXI

THERE, half an hour later, Franklin found her.

The horse was motionless. She was sitting side saddle with one slim leg crossed over the other, her arms folded over her young breasts. She was in deep thought but there was a little smile of excitement round her mouth which, if Franklin had known it as well as Brownie did, would have put him instantly on his guard. Things happened when Beatrix smiled like that.

The port-holes were open and several round patches of sunlight made pools upon the floor. One had fastened upon the blue silk bathrobe which Beatrix had thrown off. The sea was as smooth as the waters of a lake and but for the busy song of the engines the yacht might have been lying against a quay.

Franklin pulled up at the door. He had come up quietly and unnoticed. He held his breath and stood looking, with a curious mixture of homage and ire, at this mere kid, as she seemed to him to be, this girl-child perched up on that toy horse like a fairy on a toadstool, lost in a day-dream. He asked himself, in amazement, what magic there was all about her that had swung him out of his course, put a new beat into his heart, that could turn him hot and cold, churn him into a desire that was at times almost beyond human endurance,— which had put a reason and a meaning

into life that startled and surprised, laid enchantment upon him, made him wretched and angry and eager, feel like a king and a clown in quick succession.

For the first time since he had met her he had caught her unawares, quiet. It was extraordinary. This was not the young hedgehog, with all her defenses pointed, the immature woman of complete sophistication, ready at any moment to smile and answer back, to hide behind a manner, to dart out with a flash of wit, to mock, to wheedle, to inspire, to anger. This was Eve in exile, the original woman come upon suddenly alone in a glade, away from any glistening pool in which she could watch the reflection of her face and gleaming body, from any Adam upon whom to try her wiles. This was Beatrix, herself, at last.

Franklin moved to go. He felt like Peeping Tom at the top window of that house in Coventry from which he gloated upon the beauty of Godiva "clothed on in Chastity." It was unfair, almost indecent, it seemed to him, to take advantage of this lovely chameleon in her original color. And as he moved she heard him and changed.

"Hello, Strong Man," she cried out, slipping from the horse. "What's the latest?" Her expression was impudent, her friendliness an audacity.

Franklin leaned against the door. He had never supposed that a time would ever come when he would be obliged to play-act. "I've cut the fishing trip for to-day," he said, as though he were talking to a young sister. "Jones has damaged his hand and as he's the only man I care to take, the thing's off."

"Oh, poor Mr. Jones!"

"You implied just now that you were bored stiff with the yacht."

"Fed up, I meant to say, which is several degrees worse."

"What about coming out on the small launch and having lunch on one of the islands westward?"

Beatrix picked up her bath-robe and swung it round her shoulders. "It sounds too good to be true," she said, without enthusiasm. "Thank you."

Franklin blocked the door. She was in his blood. "Good God," he cried, all out of control, "why don't you smash that damned shell and be yourself all the time?"

She raised her eyebrows and swung a tassel round and round. "You don't like my shell, then?"

"I loathe it!"

"Well, nobody asked you to do anything else, you know."

Her iciness and savoir faire, the fearless way in which she stood up to him, the utter indifference to his opinion one way or the other on any mortal subject crushed his passion as effectively as a snuffer on the flame of a candle. He stood aside to let her pass.

But she had seen the sudden blaze in his eyes. It was not to be missed. She mistook it for the sort of passion that she had unconsciously roused in Sutherland York and used her wits to quell. There had been none of this, to her way of thinking, in the kisses that Franklin had snatched. They were merely to show her that he was owner. She had never con-

ceived it possible that this inarticulate man could love her. He made it too obvious that she fell far short of his ideal. But she had now at last caught the desired glimpse of that side of his character that she had been working to find. He was not then so supremely self-composed as he made himself out to be. He had shown her, in a flash,— and she got this with a great throb of feminine triumph,— that however well he had believed in the truth of his scornful statement as to the huts on the desert island when he had made it, he would lie if he repeated it now.

And with this balm to the wound in her vanity, which had never healed, she passed him. He lived as a man again for the first time since the bedroom incident,— and she liked him for it. She got this too, as she went off to her suite, and it came on top of her determination to fight " fair or unfair," as something of a shock. To begin to like him when she ought to detest him most! — " Good Lord," she said to herself as she dressed to go out in the launch, with greater pains than usual, " what a mass of contradictions you are, my child. What are you *really,* I wonder? — and how will all this end? "

Franklin went slowly across to the port-side, disheartened and depressed. " What the devil's the use of me? Every time I open my mouth it makes everything more hopeless. I'm as bad as a bull in a china shop. I'd better let her go and chuck the whole blessed thing and, after all, is there any gold to dig out or has it all turned to brass? I'll be hanged if I know."

XXXII

THERE was a certain amount of bustle going on. The yacht had found an anchorage. The small launch had been let down. A steward handed over a lunch basket to Jones, who was "willing" hard to be taken along. Men moved at the double in the execution of their duties. The first officer stood by with a watchful eye. He had made a small bet with Jones that he would be left behind.

It was midday and very warm. There was not enough wind to tease a curl. When Beatrix appeared, in the fewest possible clothes, she was followed by the stewardess carrying a sort of mackintosh bag in which were a bathing dress, a tin of powder, a brush and comb, and so forth.

"Back about five," said Franklin.

The first officer saluted. "Very good, sir. Keep an eye on the weather. It looks like a change to me."

"All right."

Franklin got into the launch and handed Beatrix aboard. "You're taking a coat, aren't you?"

"No," said Beatrix. "Why? It's lovely and warm."

"I'd like you to."

She smiled up at him and shook her head. *She* held the cards now.

Franklin caught the eye of the precocious Jones and

jerked his thumb towards the yacht. The first officer grinned to see him nip aboard. A dollar had its uses but it was well worth ten to see Jones squashed.

Away went the launch, the happy pair in the stern, the white silk shirt and red tie of the girl standing out against the water, the midday sun beating down from a cloudless sky on the trim and glossy boat. Franklin turned his head over his shoulder, and waved his left hand at the Captain. The pit-pit of the motor awoke echoes.

"Owe you a bloomin' dollar," said Jones, with a touch of temper.

The first officer let his laugh go.

The Captain left the bridge, went along to his quarters, took off his coat, lit a cigar and sat down to write to his wife. It was not his day for writing, but on his brain there was a very charming picture of a girl in a white silk shirt and a red tie.

Beatrix crossed her legs and drew in a long breath. "The prisoner goes for an airing," she said.

The chameleon had changed color again. Franklin caught her sunny mood with eagerness. "Glad to get off?"

"Oh, goodness, yes! I feel like the man who after living at the Plaza for a year sneaked into Child's for his meals. Anything for a change. Which island are you making for?"

Franklin pointed. "That one. It has a natural landing-place, enough shade ——"

"A good place to bathe from?"

"But you're not going to bathe, are you?"

"Oh, yes, I am! There are my things. Have you got yours?"

"Yes, they're in the locker."

"I shall simply adore to swim. If you'd been any sort of a husband you'd have seen to it before." She shot this out without thinking. Her spirits were too high to bother about anything that he might say. She had forgotten for the time being that he was a man.

"Being your sort of husband," he blurted out, "I keep all suggestions to myself."

She gave one quick look at him. Yes, she held the cards now, all of them. There would be no more monotony from day to day. This man was coming through, like a negative in course of development. She would be able to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, make him pay over and over again for having hurt her so deeply, and as soon as it suited her bring him to the point of being willing and anxious to let her go, getting nothing from her.

She sat back and smiled. How infinitely satisfactory it was to resume her place in the world and in her own esteem! It wasn't her fault if everybody had spoiled her. It was theirs. The point was, was she worth spoiling? And for Franklin to say yes,— Franklin who had fought so hard to wear a mask and had played the tyrant with such success,— that was good hearing!

"What time do you propose having lunch?" she asked, after a long and happy silence.

"Any time you like."

"Do you mean that?"

He looked astonished. "Yes, of course."

"I ask because it will take time for me to get used to your showing me any consideration," she said, with the imp back on her shoulder. "Your iron hand has almost cowed me. You have nearly broken my spirit. I am a humble creature now, grateful for crumbs of kindness."

Franklin threw back his head and laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

"What's the matter?" she asked, gravely.

He turned and looked her full in the face. "The devil was somewhere about when you were born," he said. "I wish to Heaven we were back in the good old days when men could beat their women without fear of police and suffrage and all the silly stuff that protects you against your proper treatment."

Before she could answer he stopped the engine and ran the launch alongside a low ridge of rock, sprang out, helped her up, jammed a pin into a cleft and fastened the painter to it.

She stood up in front of him, proud and glorious in her youth and beauty. "Well, here we are on your desert island," she said. "Beat me. Why don't you?"

For a moment he said nothing. He ran his eyes over her,— golden hair, flower-like face, eyes in which there was a lurking laugh, lovely slim body. "I almost think you're not worth it," he said.

Almost! — how foolish of him to say that. One day soon he should withdraw not only the almost but

the whole remark, on his knees,— and be left there, like a fool.

"May I have that little bag, please?" she asked, sweetly.

He hiked it out and gave it to her.

"You know the island, don't you?"

"Every inch of it."

"Where do you propose that I shall undress?"

"Come along and I'll show you." He started off, clambering over the brown rocks.

She followed to a place about a hundred yards away, — a sort of cave on a tiny spread of beach. "Oh, how perfectly delightful," she cried. "Built for bathing, isn't it?"

"Don't go in before I come back. There's a strong undertow here. Sing out when you're ready," and away he went.

Beatrix chose a dry spot on the sand and without a second's hesitation sat down and started to untie her shoes. She longed to get into the sea, to enjoy the exhilaration of exercise, to feel the warm sun on her wet limbs and be a child of Nature. Franklin might talk as glibly as he liked about the good old days but he was a sportsman. She had no fear.

He hadn't long to wait. He got into his bathing things and had only taken two puffs of a cigarette before he heard her call. Once more he climbed over and down the rocks,— stopped for a moment and drew in his breath at the sight of her,— and then went on.

She waved her hand. She was standing ankle-deep

in the sea with a red rubber cap drawn tightly over her hair, without stockings and in a suit that looked like a boy's. "Delicious," she called out.

It was the very word he had already discovered.

And in they tumbled, laughing and splashing, like children. "Let's dry in the sun," she said coming out breathlessly, her face and arms glistening, the wet suit as tight as a black skin. She sat down and peeled off the rubber cap and shook her hair free. "This is the best thing I've done for months."

He stood a few yards away and threw pebbles into the sea. He felt awfully young and fit. It was almost as good as dreaming to be out there, like that, with *her*. He chucked as hard as he could, with all his force, competing against each good shot. "How about that?" he cried out, with a laugh.

Beatrix looked at him. She had merely accepted him before. He was like the bronze figure of "The Runner" come to life, with his small head and broad, deep chest, hard muscular arms, clean, hipless lines, tremendous strength. The sight of him gave her a sudden, unexplainable sense of shyness. She tried to shake it off. It was disconcerting and foolish.

He flung himself down and began to babble to her, pouring sand through his fingers. His dark, thick hair was still wet. His skin was tanned almost black. The whites of his eyes were as white as his teeth. His moustache, red as a rule, was burned to the color of straw. An odd thought flashed through her mind. He must like her to have spared her, to have respected her. How easy to have broken her if he'd cared!

"Isn't it wonderful here?" she said, resenting a feeling of self-consciousness.

"Pretty good, isn't it? Malcolm and a whole crowd of us bathed here last year. Very queer. I remember he told me about you that morning,— how well you swim, or something, and by Jove, you do swim well,— as well as you do everything else." He was not paying compliments. There was not the faintest suggestion of flirtation in his eyes. He made the statement of an accepted fact, and went on boyishly. "Do you wonder that I keep away from towns? Just look at it here. No umbrellas stuck about. No crowd of giggling women and cocktail hunters. No strings of stinking cars lined up to carry off soft people. Here's simplicity and truth. Will you ever get to like it, youngster?"

He was disappointing her. She wouldn't for the world have had him less charming than he was, or say the things that some men had said to her after bathing, — personal, fulsome things, caddish things. But,— she *must* look nice, she felt nice, and surely there might have been just a little admiration in his eyes. Anyone would think that they had been boy and girl together. He accepted it as a matter of course.

"Yes," she said, before she could stop herself, "with you."

He laughed softly and gratefully, leaned forward and kissed her foot, then sprang up and bent over her, put one arm round her shoulders and one under her knees, quietly gathered her up shoulder-high. "Come on," he said, "it's time to dress and eat," and he car-

ried her to where her clothes were lying, with his cheek against her breast.

When he put her down and saw her face, something went crack. Good God! They were not, then, in that dream of his, married, hand in hand, with a baby boy growing in the sun!

He bolted like a mountain goat.

XXXIII

The sight of him after he had put her down, scared, with his hands out as though they had been burned, and the complete acknowledgment of the ineptitude of apology that he gave by bolting, made Beatrix laugh. It caught her sense of comedy and left a picture on her mind to which she would always be able to turn to dispel depression. All the same her heart was thumping and her cheeks were hot. She exulted in the fact, now proved beyond argument, that she drew him, that he was all alive to her attraction. She thrilled again as she thought of how he had kissed her foot and the way in which he had carried her across the beach.

She found herself trying to find the right word to describe his strength and cleanness and physical beauty, the odd boyishness of him, the passion that was without animalism,— and failed. She got as far as to wish that she had run her fingers through his hair as she felt a strong desire to do,— and then began to dress quickly, drawing back, with an odd touch of puritanism, from that kind of thought.

" I would like to come here every fine day," she said, looking about, pretending that it was the view that appealed to her, and the color and the gentle break of the sea. " And I'm as hungry as a hunter now," and she knew that she was hurrying to see him again.

When she was dressed and had packed the bathing things into the bag she stood still for a little while under the shadow of the rocks, with dry seaweed all round her in a vague pattern. Privately and in a sort of way in secret from herself, she tapped at her heart and went in, afraid to take more than one quick look around. It was all untidy and chaotic. Someone had stamped about in that hitherto perfectly neat and undisturbed place. It was unrecognizable. . . . She ran away from it. What did it mean? Why did she begin to feel that she was not the old Beatrix, not quite so high-chinned and self-composed, not quite with the same grip on the reins, softer, simpler, with a queer new feeling of homesickness for a home that she didn't know?

"Now, now, my good girl," she said, "string up, pull yourself together. No sloppiness, please." But she went eagerly back over the uneven rocks and something was making her heart more untidy than ever.

She found the food laid out on a flat place and Franklin in the launch doing something to the engine. She whistled and he looked up. "I'm awfully hungry," she said.

"Right. I'll come. This engine's a bit groggy somewhere. I thought so as we ran in. Careless blighter, Jones." He washed his hands in the sea and came up, putting on his coat. "I hate messing about with machinery. I know next to nothing about it and if I can't get it right at once I have an unholy desire to smash. I've no patience with things I don't understand."

"That's why you're so impatient with me sometimes," she said to herself,— enormously surprised that she didn't say it aloud. Obviously something was happening to her. She liked the way in which he had set out the lunch and put the cushion so that the sun wouldn't fall on her face. It was competent,— and she admired that. He was taller than he had seemed to be on board and his grey eyes had a most intriguing way of going black.

Franklin hid behind an abrupt and hard-forced casualness, very conscious of having made a complete idiot of himself. He told her everything that there was to eat, knowing very well that her quick eyes had at once made an inventory, and looked after her with a rapid politeness. He immediately entered into a long, detailed account of a most uninteresting hunting trip in Central Africa and watched her like a hawk to pounce if she made any reference to bathing or beaches. Also he talked her down when she made one or two tentative efforts to lead the conversation to something human and wilfully became more technical and dry and endless.

Finally, having strained every nerve to stand it for his sake, she gave a little scream, and he stopped. But before he could ask what was the matter she said: "Nothing's bitten me and I haven't seen smugglers. I'm simply fed up with red monkies and Croo-boys and the whole of Central Africa. Tell me just one thing. How do you feel after eating four hard-boiled eggs running?"

He chuckled. "Hungry," he said, and got off his

sweating horse. She was not going to hold him up to ridicule, and he was grateful.

They sat for a long time over lunch,— Franklin with his back to a rock and a well-worn pipe going; Beatrix leaning back on her hands with her hat off and the light on her hair. Suddenly Franklin sprang up. "Fog coming over," he said sharply. He stood over her and held out his hand.

She took it and he jerked her to her feet. She looked out and saw the *Galatea* a long way off, disappearing behind what seemed to be a solid wall of grey smoke. "Does it matter?"

"Yes. We'll leave these things. Nip into the launch quick and I'll make a dash for the yacht." He gave her arm an impatient tap and she caught up her hat and got in. Hauling out the pin he threw it aboard, jumped into the stern, started the engine and backed out, turning with a swing when he was clear. The sea was at the stand, due to go out. Already the cowlike call of fog signals had begun far off. But he had taken his line for the yacht and went for her. "With ordinary luck we shall make her," he said. "I wish you'd brought your coat."

The fog rolled over them. Minutes before it had put out the sun. "What fun!" laughed Beatrix. "It will make my hair curl."

"It'll make mine like astrakhan," he said, "if this cursed engine begins any tricks. It's missing fire now, damn the thing!"

"Don't mind me," said Beatrix airily, "if you really feel the need to swear."

"I shan't."

She looked all around. There was nothing to see except a monotony of greyness. They were pushing through a thick, damp, mysterious series of closely hung veils that dragged softly across her face. It wasn't pleasant or funny. It was,— but with Franklin at her elbow it was disloyal even to let the word take shape in her mind. If only she had brought her coat, her thickest coat. She had hardly anything on. How melancholy those sea-voices were. She hated eerie sounds. She saw Franklin bend suddenly over the engine and pry and touch and say things under his breath. Every now and then the thing had furious palpitation. Then it seemed to her to be quarrelling together and throwing its parts about. It kicked and wheezed and struggled like a held rooster,— and stopped. She began to shiver. A dozen distant cows seemed to be calling anxiously for their young. She could hardly see the peak of the launch. She wasn't frightened. Only just a little anxious, or rather uncomfortable. She loved new things but this was, undoubtedly and without argument, too new.

"Hell!" said Franklin.

"Thank you," she replied. "You've said it for me."

He peered into her face. "Shall I tell you what's happened or not? I mean do you want to face things or be coddled?"

"I thought you were beginning to know me," she said.

"Right. Now listen. This dirty little engine's

playing the fool. I've done everything I know to it, even to whispering endearing terms. But in one word, it beats me."

She nodded brightly, rubbing her thinly-clad knees together and putting her hands under her arms. "I see," she said. "Well?"

"That means that we're completely at the mercy of this rotten fog, and presently we shall drift out, maybe into trade lines. Hear the bellows of the freighters? We may be out all night with nothing to eat and drink and the risk of being run down."

Her attempt at pluck was heroic. "There aren't any nice, soft, cozy Jaeger dressing gowns in the locker, by any chance?"

"The Vanderdykes are all right," said Franklin, with queer enthusiasm. He pulled off his flannel coat. "Put this on."

"No, no."

"Put this on."

"I won't put it on."

He wasted no further words. He took first one soft damp arm and then the other, drew the sleeves over them, bent down and buttoned the coat up.

"Oh, that's lovely," she said; "as warm as a radiator. But what about you?"

"That's all right. Listen again. When McLeod finds that we don't get back he'll probably send off the big launch to hunt us up. The only way I can give them a line is to keep shouting. Very likely, giving me credit for being less a confounded fool than I am, he'll imagine two things,— either that I got off before

the fog lowered and am able to fake the engine if anything happens to it, or that, seeing the fog coming over, I decided to stay on the island, in which case it would be possible for him to feel his way to land and pick us off. As it is, there's no compass aboard and I've no means of telling which way we're drifting, and if the fog lasts all night,— puzzle, find the yacht. There you have the worst and the best of it. Listen!"

"What is it?"

He put his hands up to his mouth and raised a tremendous shout. "Ahoy,— *Galatea,* ahoy, ahoy!"

There was no answer. The sound seemed to fall dead, as though up against a wall.

"Um," he said, and stood amidships with his legs wide apart and with the utmost precision, with regular pauses, turning his head to right and left, sent out long, steady calls. Some power-boat, feeling her way in from fishing, might come within hail and give them a tow, or the big launch might be poking about for them and pick up his voice. Good God, to think that he had lived to be a man without being able to master a damn fool engine! That was one of the worst points of being able to buy service. It plucked initiative out of the brain like the bones out of fish. "*Galatea, . . . Galatea. . . .* Ahoy."

How extraordinary it was, she thought, sitting all together, as close as she could get to herself. They were like two children lost in the woods,— two people, both of whom had been able to buy the earth, played a trick upon and shown that the earth was no more theirs than any other man's,— two people cut

off, brought all the way down the great ladder with a run, to the desire for charity,— two people, young and wilful and proud and vain, who had come together by a lie, been kept together by a condition of nature against which they, for all their money, and youth and supreme confidence, were utterly impotent, — two people mutually aware of being man and woman drifting together in a new life to death, perhaps. . . .

"*Galatea, Galatea,* ahoy."

She gave a little cry of wonder and fright.

In an instant he was bending over her. "What can I do?"

"Nothing else," she said, smiling up at him.

"You're shivering."

"Oh, no. I'm only — cool. That's all."

He flung open the locker. There was nothing in it but his bathing suit. He had left a big, thick towel on the rocks to dry. He seemed to have left everything on the rocks,— including his wits. There was nothing to put round her.

"*Galatea,— Galatea,* ahoy."

He was an hour making up his mind what to do. During that time, listening hard for any near signal or answering call, he shouted and kept up a jerky conversation, talking to Beatrix as though she were a child, trying to make her laugh with futile jokes that he would have sworn he couldn't have remembered. Like a Trojan she played up and duly laughed with chattering teeth and many times whipped in quickly with an "Ahoy" herself to help him out.

Suddenly she began to whimper. She couldn't help it. She was so cold and so frightened and to her it seemed as though this were the end of everything.

And that decided him. He picked her up and sat down, put her in his lap, wound his arms round her and put his cheek against her cheek. This girl-child must have all his warmth. He was responsible for this inefficient business. The fool engine had beat him. . . . She was no longer in his blood. She was a beautiful human thing who must be kept from crying, kept warm, kept alive. The sex in him was utterly dormant. The desire to preserve had conquered it. He was a worried, anxious man with a delicate lovely thing on his hands and it was his fault, curse him, that she was whimpering and chilled and horribly uncomfortable and up against death perhaps. At any moment they might be run down,— at a loose end, out there among the veils. And he held all her softness tight to him and presently began to rub her,— shoulders and arms and legs, to make her blood circulate, to stop her from whimpering, saying the sort of things that men always say to children who have hurt themselves, silly, little, queer things, over and over again.

It was wonderful. . . . He was so strong and fine, and she cuddled up to his big chest and put her arms about him and gave herself up, wholly, without a qualm. With the same regularity he threw up his head and shouted and she heard the rumble of his voice, and for a long time he held her and rubbed,

never letting her blood stop, only cutting into his murmur of comfort by shouting:

"*Galatea,— Galatea,* ahoy."

The boat was drifting. The water gave it no more than a gentle rock. She shut her eyes and smiled. She had retained the mind of a woman with the body of a child. It was brilliantly clear to her that out there, then, in that drifting boat, all among those closely hung veils of damp web, the spirit of this man was alight, and that in his hands, that had been so hot and eager to touch, there was now the supreme tenderness that is without passion. It was wonderful. It was not happening. This was not earth. He, such a man, who had kissed her foot and put his cheek against her breast, and she, who had exulted in her power to stir and draw on. It must be Heaven. Their clashes and outbursts were over. They had died together and met again in spirit. She had never dreamed of anything like this.

"*Galatea,— Galatea,* ahoy," yelled Franklin. It was the pit-pit of an engine that came to his tired brain.

"Ahoy to you."

It was not Heaven. It was earth and they were alive and that was Jones's voice. She cuddled closer and her heart began to thump. She didn't want to be taken away.

"At last," said Franklin. "Steady, Jones," he called out. "We're drifting. Slide up alongside and take us on. We're cold. . . . Well played, little girl," and he kissed her on the mouth.

That night he insisted upon her having dinner in bed. Ah, how good that steaming, hot bath had been.

Afterwards, strained and very, very tired, she fell asleep at once, and went back to the little beach with its vague patterns of sea-weed on yellow sand, and they swam again and dried in the sun, and talked and laughed, and he lay at her feet, brown and clean-cut, with burning eyes,— but when he picked her up this time and carried her to the cave she held him tight and found his lips and lay with him on the warm sand. . . .

It must have been midnight when she woke suddenly and put her hand out to touch his face.

It was not true. She was alone,— and she loved him so!

XXXIV

It was exactly half-past nine the following morning when Jones rapped at the door of the Captain's stateroom. The dancing sailor registered the note of irritation in the shout of "Come" with a comic grievance and went in to find McLeod struggling to remove a recalcitrant beard with a very disagreeable razor. There was, God knows, every reason for a touch of temper mixed with that sort of amazement that a man feels when an old and true friend goes back on him. Shaving at the best of times is a penance, at the worst a catastrophe. The Captain was a clean-shaven man in the middle forties and although, as one of the Esau tribe, he had used a razor since he was eighteen, he had failed to understand the peculiar psychology of steel and to appreciate the fact that the blade of a razor is just as temperamental and just as much affected by the vagaries of liver as the average human being. He made no allowances.

"What is it, Jones?"

"Sorry ter disturb you, sir, but there's a launch comin' up on the port side with Mr. Fraser aboard. Thought you'd like ter know, sir."

"Have you told Mr. Franklin?"

"No, sir. Considered it my duty ter report it ter you, sir."

"Well, nip round to Mr. Franklin and tell him, will you? I don't see what M. F. wants to trail us for unless it's something important."

And so Jones nipped, little knowing that Malcolm's unexpected visit was to bring about a new crisis in the lives of Franklin and Beatrix.

Only just dressed, Franklin followed Jones out in time to see Malcolm come aboard. "Why, hello, my dear fellow," he called out with immense cordiality, "you're just in time for breakfast." It seemed an age since he had seen his friend.

The sky was clear again, the sun warm and gracious, the sea just lively enough to make the yacht dance. The fog which had come from nowhere for no reason had gone back in the same mood. Franklin had slept in one solid, dreamless piece. All was well with the world.

There was a whimsical smile on Malcolm's cherubic face. "I wasn't quite sure that I should be welcome," he said, dying to know how things were going. "The word breakfast never sounded so well to me. I'm ravenous. Where's Beatrix?"

"Not up yet. Come to the dining saloon." He took Malcolm's arm and led him off, delighted to see him.

"Just a second," said Malcolm. "I think you'd better tell McLeod to turn the yacht about at once. It'll save time."

Franklin drew up. "Turn the yacht about? Why?"

"I have a good reason for breaking in on your tri-

umphant isolation," said Malcolm, "little as you appear to suspect it, and if you ——"

He stopped speaking. Beatrix was coming towards them. His heart turned at the sight of her. Never in his life had he seen her looking so radiant and lovely and like a rose with all its sweetest leaves still folded, and in her expression there was something so new in its sunny peacefulness that he caught his breath with surprise.

"Malcolm," she cried out, and put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him like a sister. He had expected to see a caged bird beating her wings and to be rushed at as one who brought a reprieve. His curiosity nearly forced him into personalities.

"How nice of you to look us up," she said, taking his other arm. "You're just in time for breakfast."

The word breakfast used by them both struck the most intimate note. It is the most domestic of all words. The first stab of jealousy that Malcolm had ever felt made him, before he could master himself, break their astounding atmosphere of contentment, this elysium of peace.

"Mrs. Keene is very ill," he said, sharply. "Ida Larpent and I have done what we could for two days but she's crying continually for you. I drove along the coast as fast as I could and unless you come back with me I don't know what may happen."

Beatrix turned and looked at Franklin. He read in her eyes an appeal to put her quickly at the side of the little lady whose devotion was dog-like. He was wrong. The look she gave him was full of an-

guish at the thought of leaving him and the sort of half-hope that he would play the tyrant and the bully and refuse to let her go.

"Jones," he sang out.

"Sir?"

"Ask Captain McLeod to see me at once."

"Very good, sir."

"Malcolm, take Beatrix into the dining saloon. I'll join you in about five minutes."

And as Beatrix went on with Malcolm, all her appetite for breakfast gone, she said to herself with the inevitable unreasonableness of a woman in love, "He doesn't care, he doesn't care. Any pretty girl would do as well. He's glad to let me go."

Franklin met McLeod. "Mrs. Franklin must go ashore as soon as you can get her there. Mrs. Lester Keene is very ill. Mr. Fraser has a car waiting and he will drive my wife back to where we landed the party the other day,—Jones in charge. I can't be trusted with an engine now, y'know. I shall drive with them and come aboard again when you turn up, which you will do with best possible speed. Get that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right." He waved his hand and went below to his own sanctum. His valet was busy in the bedroom. "Moffat, pack things for me for a couple of days, and tell the stewardess to do the same for Mrs. Franklin. Sharp's the word. We're leaving the yacht in half-an-hour."

Then he went to breakfast, having set things on the

move in his characteristic way. Beatrix and Malcolm were talking generalities in a rather strained manner. The thoughts of both were busy. It was very obvious to Malcolm that something had happened to Beatrix. Her whole attitude, as well as her expression, had changed. She even seemed to be dressed differently in some subtle way. She was, too, he thought, less young, less confident, less on the defensive, less consistently brilliant, less all-in-the-shop-window,— more like the little girl who had tucked herself into his heart.

"What happened?" asked Franklin, doing more than justice to a liberal helping of scrambled eggs à Ludovic.

He'd never be able to eat so well if he cared, thought Beatrix.

Malcolm's eyes were clear again. He was less than the dust to the heroine of his boyhood and he had prayed that she might be won by Pel. After all, he was a poet.

"Well," he said, "that kind, good soul began by having hysterics on the quay. She was the first to realize, presumably because of a long course of novel reading, that we had been emptied away like rubbish and that the *Galatea* had turned seawards with Beatrix."

Franklin nodded and drank deeply of strong coffee.

Beatrix respected him for drinking strong, black stuff with breakfast, but she would have given days of her life to have had just one smile from him then.

"I knew the one-eyed place on which we had been

dumped, took charge of the three women — saving Mrs. Keene from a watery grave — and drove to the one possible inn. Quite by accident I had some money on me. Helene and I did what we could to soothe Mrs. Keene but she took to bed and sprang a high temperature. The local doctor attended her and called it a nervous breakdown and that's what, being in the confidence of you both, I believe it is. Mrs. Larpent surprised me by being very kind and sympathetic, which shows how foolish it is to judge a woman by her jewelry and the way she does her hair. We have had a very worrying time. Finally I made up my mind to hire a car and drive along the coast until I came level with you. I started before daybreak and here I am. Mrs. Keene never ceases to call for Beatrix and I promised to bring her back. You will both help me to keep my promise, I know."

"Well, of course," said Franklin.

"Well, of course," echoed Beatrix. Conceive it, Beatrix,— an echo! Love plays strange tricks upon humanity.

Franklin went on eating. "We leave on the big launch in twenty minutes. We shall drive back in your car and stay at the inn until the *Galatea* anchors off the quay."

"Thank you," said Malcolm. "The sight of Beatrix will do Mrs. Keene more good than buckets of medicine."

Beatrix turned to Franklin. "Does 'we' include you?" she asked, with what Malcolm thought was a most curious and startling note of humbleness.

"Rather," said Franklin.

Whereupon Beatrix began to eat.

Sitting in the shade of the veranda of the inn Ida Larpent killed time with a new sense of hope.

XXXV

It was nearly four o'clock that afternoon when the dust-covered car arrived at Malcolm's one-eyed place some miles from Charleston, South Carolina. It was a long, tedious, hot drive through country which Beatrix called untidily picturesque. The telegraph posts along the roads leaned at rakish angles. Everywhere there were cotton fields with irregular lines of plants from which the blossoms had fallen, dilapidated shacks with piccaninnies playing about them and uncorseted colored women squatting on the stoops. Strange washing hung out to dry with great frequency and every now and then there was a fine Colonial house with a garden alight with flowers.

The inn, or hotel, as it insisted on being called, was the only building in the settlement which seemed to have received a coat of white paint for many moons and it was obviously the centre of attraction. Three rather carelessly treated Fords were parked near its main entrance and two drummers were rocking on the unwashed stoop with soft damp cigars tucked into the corners of their mouths. Little families of chickens ran after their conscientious mothers around the building and several turkeys stalked aimlessly here and there like actors out for a walk. Numerous outhouses leaned against each other for support,— one or two of them showing an ingenuity in repair that

was almost Irish. On the walls of several were pasted glaring bills of motion picture plays then being shown in Charleston, and one was entirely given up to the glorification in large letters of a certain small pill. There was, indeed, a curious intimacy, a sort of who-cares-a-whoop air about the whole place. You could tease the turkeys, scatter the chickens, grin at the Fords and spit with the drummers. It was Carolina and hot and the cotton was coming on. What the deuce, anyway!

From the beginning of the journey to the end of it Franklin hardly opened his mouth. Watched surreptitiously by Beatrix, he sat silent and peculiarly distrait, like a man who was either working out an engrossing problem or bored to extinction. After several dogged attempts to get him to talk, Malcolm gave him up and for some miles devoted himself entirely to Beatrix. To her he told everything funny that he had ever heard or invented without winning a smile. She too was as far away and as unresponsive as Franklin. And so, giving them both up, Malcolm joined the sphinxes and let his imagination run loose. When this unsociable party halted for lunch at a wayside inn the conspiracy of silence was broken, but only as it would have been by three people who were total strangers thrown together briefly. The few necessary commonplaces were said. Franklin and Beatrix went on thinking and Malcolm continued to imagine what they were thinking about. The driver of the hired car, a middle-aged man who had married an argumentative woman in his youth, gave a great deal of

slow consideration to the matter. His sense of beauty pulled his sympathy towards Beatrix, but his sense of brotherhood impelled him to stand by Franklin in what he decided must be a matrimonial bust-up, and so he remained neutral as far as they were concerned and concentrated pity upon Malcolm, to whom, luckily, sleep eventually came.

Franklin was suffering from inevitable reaction. He had returned to earth from a dream. He had come back to a very practical world from the land of make-believe. He had fallen from the unnatural height of a sublime, passionless love to the natural level of a man whose passion pounded on the walls of his heart and ran like electricity through his veins. Out of the brief mist which had shut out the truth of things he stared to find that Beatrix was as far away from him as ever. He was in the pit of depression, especially as he had a feeling that any chance he might have had to win Beatrix was gone now that she had left the yacht. It seemed to him that she had escaped.

As for Beatrix, who had felt the beat of Franklin's heart against her breast and would smilingly have gone beyond the outpost of eternity in his arms, reaction came with a shock that left her with no other desire than to cry. Suddenly to have found herself and the meaning of life; suddenly, out there in the fog, to have seen the sense and sanity of things and burgeoned into a woman under the warmth of love and dreamed all night of its fulfilment and then to waken to *this,*— a man who neither looked at her nor

spoke, who hustled her from the yacht and would probably leave her with her friends and go his way. If he had loved her as well as been stirred by the attraction of her sex he must have told her so that morning. This was the end of all her arguments. Having her at his mercy he let her go, she told herself bitterly. Probably he had escorted her to shore to renew his flirtation with Ida Larpent. Ah! That was it. Malcolm had said that she had remained at the hotel. She wouldn't be a bit surprised if the Larpent woman had bribed Malcolm to come to the yacht with his tale of woe . . . and when, as the car drew up, Ida Larpent sauntered out wearing one of her most enigmatical smiles and a very becoming frock the hitherto unknown demon of jealousy seized Beatrix in his burning grasp and for the first time in her life she became the little sister of all womankind, a girl whose wealth had turned to ashes and whose autocracy fell about her like dead leaves.

"How's Brownie?" She ignored Mrs. Larpent's hand and cheek, and passed into the house without waiting for an answer. The screen door went back with a clang.

"Good Lord," said Franklin, summing up the whole place in one rapid glance, "what a filthy hole!"

Malcolm pointed to the chickens. "But look at these," he laughed, refreshed.

"Welcome," said Ida Larpent, not so much clasping Franklin's hand as embracing it. She had the knack. "It's good to see you again. Life has its compensations."

"Thanks."

"Quite a good sort, after all," thought Franklin. "Ripping hat. Always makes me feel like a man who goes behind the scenes after the last act."

A white-haired, chatty negro led Beatrix up two flights of carpetless stairs, along a narrow echoing passage to a door almost at the end of it.

"Don't knock," said Beatrix, and paid him with a smile.

The room was bare and large and barn-like. Its three large windows were screened. Its stained floor was rubbed and almost colorless. There was a cheap writing desk of yellow wood, a glass-topped dressing table to match, a stand with a water bottle on it and a shiver-inspiring white cuspidor beneath, several strips of thin-worn string matting and a lamp hanging from the centre of a none too clean ceiling.

Mrs. Lester Keene was lying on a bed with brass knobs which sagged perceptibly in the middle. Beatrix tip-toed to it and went down on her knees and put her arms round the little lady's shoulders. "Brownie dear, I've come," she said.

There was a great maternal cry, and a passion of tears.

"That's right. Weep, Brownie, my dear little Brownie, it will do you good. You were frightened for me, weren't you? The others wondered what was the matter with you, but you and I know, don't we? There are no secrets between us and now you'll get well, won't you? I'm so sorry!"

And the little woman clung weakly and fondly and

stroked the face of the beautiful girl who meant so much to her and for whom she liked to think that she was responsible. "Oh, my dear, my dear," she cried, "you don't know what agonies I've been through, or how dreadful it was to see the yacht going away and you alone and unprotected with that man."

"Was it possible that *I* called him 'that man' then?" thought Beatrix.

"I've been nearly distraught to think of all the indignities that you have had to suffer. I could not close my eyes for fear of seeing unspeakable pictures, though at night I thought I could hear you calling to me to come and help you and you so young and proud and fine and helpless. Oh — oh! and are you all right? Will you swear that you're all right?"

"Yes, Brownie dear, I'm all right. Can't you see that I'm all right?" But there were tears on her cheeks and a pain at her heart because she was so much all wrong. Couldn't he have said just *one* word all day, just one, to show her that she meant more to him than a mere woman,— after all that they had been through between life and death? Couldn't he have given her one look to show that he was something besides merely a man and that he had held her so perfectly in his arms and kept her warm to love and comfort and hold always, always?

"Then why are you crying?" demanded Mrs. Keene, sharply.

"You make me cry, Brownie, to see you like this."

"*I* make you cry? *You!*" The voice was incredulous, skeptical, amazed. The elderly companion

whose dog-like devotion and affection had not blinded her to the faults of this gold-child, this artificial flower born and reared in a house of egregious wealth, helped herself up in the bed and peered into the girl's face. "There is something wrong! I hardly know you. Tell me, tell me!" Her voice was thin and shrill from anxiety and fear.

The girl's eyes fell a little and a sob shook her shoulders.

"Oh, my God! What has that man done to you?"

Beatrix put a finger on her lips but the old note of command had gone. "Hush, Brownie, hush," she said gently. "Don't cry out like that, dear. You'll make yourself ill again."

The little woman's face grew whiter. "Oh, my darling!" she blurted out, conscience-stricken, "if only I had been able to look after you, if only I had been strong enough to refuse to leave you! You don't know what you mean to me. I know I've been useless and weak. I know I've never really been able to direct or guide you but I've done my best, darling, and it will kill me to think that you, *you,* who have seemed to me like a princess in a fairy tale, so pure and fine, have been hurt by this man. Oh, my dear, what has that man done to you?"

"Listen, Brownie. That man has made me come all the way down to earth. That man has taken everything from me,— pride and scorn and shallowness, the desire to experiment, the impatience of possession, and put there instead something that makes me want to go and sit down at the side of women with children and

hold their hands. That man has brought me up to truth and reason. He has made me human and humble and jealous and eager for his touch. He has made me love him and need him and want to serve him. Look at me, Brownie, look at me and see it for yourself!"

She held up her lovely, tear-stained face, the face that Malcolm had described, the picture of which was locked up in his heart. And Mrs. Keene, speechless, looked and saw and wondered.

And suddenly the golden head was crushed against the childless bosom. "Brownie, Brownie, he doesn't love me, he doesn't love me, and I wish I were dead."

Could this be Beatrix,— this?

XXXVI

Finding that Franklin had left the bedroom that had been allotted to him after washing and changing his clothes,— the others had been flung about the barrack-like room,— Malcolm went downstairs and out to the veranda. Ida Larpent was sitting in front of a tea-table like Patience on a monument, dodging mosquitoes.

"Where's Pelham?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"I was going to ask you."

"And Beatrix?"

"In with Mrs. Keene, I think."

Mrs. Larpent heaved a little sigh. "Poor old thing! She'll get well now, and we, I take it, can go our ways in peace. I don't ever want to go through this experience again."

Malcolm laughed. "Well, I've rather enjoyed it," he said, "apart, of course, from the fact that Mrs. Keene has suffered."

"Enjoyed it?" There was a note of anger in Mrs. Larpent's clear voice. "Such food, such beds, such cockroaches, such service, such an appalling place?"

"I've been studying the beautiful unselfishness of the mother hen," said Malcolm. "It's a revelation to me."

Mrs. Larpent shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "I've known one or two other poets in my time," she said, "but I've never been able to make out whether their childishness was a pose or mere stupidity. It requires no study to know that the mother hen is not unselfish. Like other mothers she is the creature of overwhelming circumstances, the slave of nature. However, what's the news? What is to happen next? Is the *Galatea* to deliver us back to New York or do we find our own way back?"

"Don't ask me," said Malcolm, who wouldn't have said anything else if he had known it. Mrs. Larpent was one of the few women of his acquaintance whom he really disliked. He found her hard and without an ounce of idealism or imagination. She believed in nothing that didn't carry a certificate of proof, in no one who was not duly entered in "Who's Who," looked upon faith as a sort of patent medicine, hope as a form of mental weakness and charity as a sharp way of getting rid of people who either made street noises or had pathetic stories to tell. He and she had not got on at all well.

To the great relief of both Franklin came up. "We're waiting tea for you," said Mrs. Larpent.

"I'm so sorry. I've been along to the post-office. I thought I'd better wire this address to the Vanderdykes as we shall be here till the *Galatea* lies off. They had our next place of call for letters." He sat down rather heavily. "Yes, tea's a good idea."

There was nothing of happiness about this man,

Mrs. Larpent told herself in a spirit of self-congratulation. He had obviously gained nothing by carrying off Beatrix except a little line between his eyebrows. Serve him right. She was glad to see it. *She* could have made him happy if the party had continued on the yacht.

Tea came but no Beatrix. Mrs. Larpent poured out, and as she did so her spirits rose. Things looked good. She had never been able to find a reason for their sham honeymoon, puzzle as she might. It remained an inscrutable mystery, and all her cunning endeavors to trick Mrs. Keene and Malcolm into confession had failed. She argued that they knew,— Malcolm because he brought Beatrix to the yacht and Mrs. Keene because of her extraordinary nervous breakdown. In any case that business failed to be of interest now. The point was how much, if at all, was Franklin in love with or physically attracted by Beatrix. If he was in love with her and had been turned down,— his whole appearance and attitude proved that,— her opportunity to catch him on the rebound was most excellent. In her large experience men committed matrimony or undertook obligations immediately after being refused. If he had been physically attracted merely, and had met with no success,— which was patent,— the same argument applied. How glad she was that she had seen the wisdom of staying in that abominable shack, ostensibly to look after the woman who got so completely on her nerves. Her room was next to Franklin's, too. Could luck have been kinder?

"Have you sent any tea up to Beatrix?" asked Franklin, suddenly.

"No," said Mrs. Larpent. "She'll order it herself if she wants any, don't you think so?"

Franklin got up. "Excuse me," he said, and stalked into the hotel, asked the comatose clerk the number of Mrs. Keene's room, waved away a gymnastic colored boy who volunteered to show him and went upstairs two at a time. Sooner or later he would be obliged, he had come to the conclusion, either to put as many thousand miles between himself and Beatrix as the map of the earth allowed or treat her as a sister. All the day's thinking had proved this to him, who knew so little about women.

He knocked on the door, waited and knocked again.

It was opened by Beatrix, who was still in her dust-covered clothes and hat. He saw at once that she had been crying and resented it as much as though he had seen her arm in a splint.

"Have you had tea?" he asked bluntly, because he wanted to kiss her beyond description and hadn't the right.

"No," said Beatrix.

"Shall I send some up?"

"Will you? I'd love it. I'm so tired."

"Yes, of course you are. Why didn't you ring and make this rotten hotel run about?"

"I forgot. It's awfully nice of you to have bothered about me."

Franklin swallowed a rush of words, nodded, made small work of the echoing stairs and stood in front

of the unoffending clerk with eyes black with unexplainable anger. "Why the devil haven't you sent tea up to Mrs. Franklin? Don't argue. Get it done at once or I'll pull this barn down board by board. For two, with hot buttered toast. Quick!"

Two colored boys who had overheard these words and caught the clerk's eyes went off like demented athletes. Left standing, the clerk pulled himself together. He felt as though a cart load of bricks had fallen on his head. What was the matter with this man? Anyone would think he'd bought the darned earth!

Ida Larpent and Malcolm did most of the talking while Franklin drank three cups of tea and ate all the toast. Malcolm knew that before long he would be marched off somewhere to listen to his old pal's troubles and so he waited with his characteristic patience and all his sympathy on the boil, determined not to permit his curiosity to lead his imagination into any further maze. It seemed to him to be disloyal. Ida Larpent concentrated her strategic knowledge upon a plan of action to be carried into effect during the night. She must act quickly because Franklin, like Beatrix, went off at sudden tangents. He might take it into his head to leave the place at a moment's notice and she might not see him again for months.

"How are you going to kill time until the so-called dinner?" she asked, looking at Franklin. "Can I suggest anything?"

"No, thanks," he replied. "Malcolm and I are going to explore the quay, if there is such a thing."

She laughed softly. He could do what he liked with all the hours till midnight. The others at the beginning of a new day would be hers, if she knew anything of men and life. She opened a book.

Franklin got up, pushed the table away, dragged up a chair for Mrs. Larpent's feet, made a mental note of the fact that she was a good sort and took Malcolm's arm.

"Come on, old son," he said. "Let's get out of this."

Turkey and chickens made way for these tall creatures, the two drummers at the other end of the veranda concentrated a united gaze on Mrs. Larpent's ankles, a Ford went off with a harsh rattle carrying two men in their shirt sleeves, and a ragamuffinly kitten gave a marvelous imitation of a bucking horse and bolted up a tree.

As they faced the Atlantic Franklin squared his shoulders and drew in a long, grateful breath. The line went out of his forehead and his mouth relaxed. Here at any rate was an element that he understood in all its moods, rough and smooth.

"Malcolm, will you come to Europe with me?"

"Any time," said Malcolm.

"Right. To-morrow night, then. I wish to God I had an aeroplane. We'd get away sooner."

He looked round impatiently. The so-called quay might have been made away back before the Great Wind and carelessly patched together after it. It ran out into a small bay for the use of perhaps a dozen

cat-boats, a couple of nice yawls, a very spruce shoal-draught sloop just in, a well put together lark and a number of dirty little power boats belonging to the negro fishermen. Several bankrupt-looking sheds added to the general neglected appearance of the whole scene, which was heightened by three carcasses of dead dories with all their ribs sticking out lying up on the beach and all among dry seaweed and rubbish.

"What's the particular hurry?" asked Malcolm.

Franklin turned upon him. "I'm sick of myself, sick of life, sick of the whole blessed show," he said. "I want to get right away. I want to put all the sea there is between myself and Beatrix. If anybody had told me before I went to the Vanderdykes that a bit of a girl was going to turn me into a first-class fool I'd have called him a sentimental crank."

"I know," said Malcolm. "It all depends on the girl, though. All wise men, all men who fathom the fact in time that life means nothing if it's selfish, fall over each other to be made first-class fools of by the right girl. Besides, who says you've been turned into a first-class fool? You love Beatrix without success. So do I. That doesn't make us fools, either of us. I hold that we have to thank our stars to have met her. The fool part of it would be in not having loved her. That's my view of it. And look here, Pel, old man, don't be quite so ready to call people sentimental cranks who talk about love. What are we here for? What's the use of living without it? Clubs are built for men who have missed the one good thing there is to win in this queer little interlude between something

we can't remember and something we're not intended to know."

Franklin listened to this unexpected outburst with a sort of boyish gravity. Malcolm had the knack of saying things that were true, and this that he had just said, with uncharacteristic heat, was dead true. Franklin knew that. Moreover he had the honesty and the courage to say so.

"Quite right, old son. I was talking through my hat as usual. But the difference between you and me is this. You're a poet and when you're turned down you have the safety valve of verse. You can write about it. I'm only a common or garden sporting cove who has to grin and bear it. And when you've got a girl like Beatrix in your blood there isn't much grinning, believe me. Come on. Let's walk and I'll put you up to date."

And away they went arm in arm along the shore while the sun went down.

And up in her bare bedroom Beatrix gave herself eagerly into the hands of her maid. "If I look my best," she thought, "perhaps ——"

Men and women and history,— repetition, that's all!

XXXVII

Dinner was fairly good. The word had been taken to the kitchen that Franklin might stalk in and kill the chef. That dark mass of humanity outdid himself in consequence. Life was very dear to him.

One of the waiters at Franklin's table had been fifteen years in the hotel. The other twelve. They mutually agreed behind the screen that there had never been two such beautiful ladies in its dining-room in their time. They too were on their mettle.

Beatrix played up. She had bathed and slept a little and poured out her heart to Brownie and felt better from the fact that her presence had done her old friend so much good. Besides, she had grit and the courage of a thoroughbred. She was not going to let anyone see that there was a pain in her heart if she died for it. And so she set the ball rolling and kept the table merry. It was well done.

Malcolm did his share and brought tears of laughter from everybody by describing a scandal-mongering conversation between two turkeys. The younger of the two waiters nearly had a fit. Ida Larpent was in excellent spirits and Franklin as cheery as he could always be when he tried.

Afterwards they adjourned to a ludicrously-furnished room called the drawing-room decorated with

tortured wood and chairs which had obviously been designed by plumbers. Everything in it was the color of Virginia tobacco,— the epitome of biliousness. Here they played Bridge while the proprietor's overplump daughter with a huge white bow on the top of her head giggled and whispered to several girl friends in the sun parlor and presently set a Victrola going. Between the tunes, which were redolent of Broadway, the click of billiard balls could be heard. Frogs in a nearby pond croaked their inevitable chorus.

At the end of the third rubber Beatrix rose. "I can't go on," she said. "There are so many distractions. It's almost like being in a railway accident. Take me down to look at the sea, Pelham."

Franklin led the way. He would have liked it better if she had been angry with him and there had been an excuse for quarreling. He might then have had a reason for blazing at her and losing his self-control. To be treated like a brother,— it was better than nothing, he supposed, but it made him feel like a man with his arms roped to his sides.

They went along the sandy road lined with curious stunted trees to the quay. A full moon dominated a sky that blazed with stars. There was not even the tail-end of a cloud. The lazy sea plopped heavily against the stanchions and made the small craft wobble from side to side. Ropes creaked and quivered. There was hardly any wind. On the tip of the quay a girl was sitting with her head on a man's shoulder. One of his arms was round her waist. Their legs dangled over the edge. It was a night for love.

Beatrix said nothing for several minutes. She stood hatless, with her hands behind her back and her shoulders square. She looked dangerously young, Franklin thought, and far too precious to be unguarded. But with another look he corrected himself,— so young that her confidence was a better guard than an armed man. He wondered what she was thinking about.

"You've never had a sister, have you?" she asked suddenly.

"No," said Franklin.

"What a pity."

"Why?"

"She would have been a lucky girl."

"There you are," thought Franklin. "Nothing but a brother, you see."

She faced him unexpectedly. "What are you going to do with me now?"

He knew his answer but he made it, "What do you want me to do with you?"

And she made hers, "Something must be done."

He stood looking at her. He had no inkling that they were at cross purposes because he was not a woman's man. Also because he was entirely without conceit. It was only when he dreamed and a miracle happened, that Beatrix returned his love. In her new state, which was so new that she felt almost a stranger in the world, Beatrix was without conceit too. She believed that Franklin, because she had seen the nobility of his character out there in that strange mist, had outgrown the attraction of her sex and had

become brotherly. Some big moment was needed to startle these two young people who were so much alike into the truth,— these two who had always been handicapped by excessive wealth and whose lives had touched in a manner that was so bizarre and accidental. What if the big moment never came? Big moments are not put in the way of everybody and even if they are, go by unrecognized in so many instances.

"Yes," said Franklin, "we can't go on like this."

"You still think that the only way out is marriage?"

"I'm afraid so."

"And then divorce?"

"Yes."

Beatrix heaved a deep sigh. "I've asked so much of you. I couldn't ask you for that."

"You don't have to ask me. It's my suggestion."

"You certainly are a sportsman," she said. And then she gave a little gasp. "Good Heavens, what must I have been made of to have done that thing? It seems incredible as I look at it now."

He spoke wistfully, eagerly. "Does it? Why? You're the same Beatrix. You haven't changed."

"Are you the same Pelham Franklin? Haven't you changed? Let's be honest out here to-night. This is the hour for honesty with the moon so plain and the stars so gleaming and the sky so transparent. Besides, I can't tell you why, but I have a sort of premonition that you and I are going to be required to face another crisis. I got the feeling this afternoon, when I was lying down. A bird was singing outside

my window, a curious, jerky little song, and it seemed to tell me that I must meet something squarely and with courage."

"Courage?" said Franklin. "You have that."

"You think so?"

"I don't know it if you haven't got it."

"That's the first really nice thing you've ever said to me, Pelham."

It was a pity that she couldn't see the queer thing that happened to his eyes. "I don't say everything I think," he said, with a sort of laugh.

"That's nothing to be proud of. There's lots of room for silence in the grave. Let's go back." She was impatient again. She couldn't understand why things were not going as she would have them go. They always had.

He stopped her. "No, not yet. I want to tell you something, kiddie."

Tears came into her eyes somehow when he called her that.

"Listen. If anything *is* on the way to us,— and if you think so I expect there is,— most probably it will send me one way over the earth and you another because this way has failed. When I'm out of sight I want you to remember one thing."

"I shall remember it all," she said.

"But especially one thing. I set out to break you."

"You've done that," she said.

"No, please don't rot me,— not to-night, out here. If ever my name flicks across your memory at any

time remember my idiotic attempt to give you the spurs."

"Why especially that?"

"Because you beat me,— beat me to a frazzle and that's the only good thing about this episode."

"You're very generous," she said, and held out her hand. She had an insane desire to sit down on those dirty boards and cry. Everything he did and said made her love him more and more. What was the matter with her that she had turned him into a brother? Life had appeared to be so easy to arrange. It had become so difficult.

He took her hand and held it tight. "I'm not generous," he said, scoffing. "Don't let any man try the breaking business. Remain as you are. Be the spoilt girl all the rest of your life, kiddie. You're all right. Now come in and go to bed and sleep hard. That thing you got just now may find us in the morning."

And they turned their backs to the moon and to love and walked away without another word.

Malcolm and Ida Larpent had gone to bed. And the fat girl with the big bow and her young friends had disappeared. The Victrola was silent. There were no lights in the drawing-room or the sun parlor, but the click of billiard balls came into the foyer and the reek of cheap cigars. Two colored bell boys on the verge of sleep sat near the desk. Outside the frogs were still at work on their endless ensemble.

Beatrix nodded and smiled and went upstairs. She had left her key in Mrs. Keene's room. Franklin

hung about aimlessly for ten minutes reading the railroad timetables with no interest and the printed notices to visitors and looking at the colored advertisements of steamships and whisky and magazines, without taking them in. Yes, the episode had failed. He was beat,— beat to a frazzle. What was going to happen next?

Ida Larpent heard him stride along the passage, go into his room and shut the door. Through the thin walls she could hear him shunt a chair and do something to his windows and move about.

She wore a curious smile and an almost transparent nightgown. Her black hair was all about her shoulders and in her eyes there was a strange eagerness.

For half an hour she sat as still as a statue watching the hands of her little diamond-studded watch. Her opportunity had come. She was going to seize it. She knew men, no one better. This one needed love and she, yes, she of all women would give it to him.

In that long, peculiar half hour during which her body was without movement, her brain worked and her heart raced. She loved and would make a sacrifice for love. That was the burden of her inward song. Not of the future, not of freedom from money worries, not of mercenary things,— love, her first great love and its fulfilment. Of that she thought, smiling, and thanking her stars.

And when the half hour was up she rose, put on a peignoir, slipped out of her room on the tips of her little pink slippers and tapped at Franklin's door. He called out "Come" and she went in.

He was sitting in a dressing gown in a cane chair, under the electric lamp that hung from the middle of the ceiling, with a pipe in his mouth and a book in his hand and his feet on a cranky table. There was a cloud of good tobacco smoke round his head.

He sprang to his feet at the sight of her. Although there was nothing of the frightened woman about her, the only thing that occurred to him was that she needed his help. A thief after her rings, probably.

"What's the matter?" instinctively lowering his voice. "Anyone in your room?"

She shut the door and smiled at him. After all she rather liked his naïve assumption that she had not gone to his room for anything but his assistance in some emergency. It was very charming and boyish and clean and all that. It made things just a little difficult to explain though. "I see you're not in a hurry to go to bed," she said, "so may I sit down and have a cigarette? I've lots to say to you and there has been no other opportunity to-day."

"Of course," he said. "Please do. I hate reading, and sleep is miles away." He placed his chair for her, the only more or less comfortable one in the room, and got a cigarette and lit it. "Awfully nice of you to come in. Well, what's the news?"

He drew up a stiff-backed chair and sat straddle with his arms on the back of it. A good sort, Ida Larpent, he told himself, and extraordinarily picturesque. He couldn't make out why she didn't marry again. She could take her pick.

"Please may I have a pillow? I can feel every rib

of cane. It hurts a little. I'm sorry to be fussy."

"Not a bit." He placed one of his pillows behind her back. "How's that?"

"Much better, thanks."

He went back to his chair and sat looking at her with a most friendly and admiring smile.

She liked the last part of it but not the first. It was all more than a little disconcerting. She knew men but not of his type. It would perhaps have been better for men, to say nothing of herself, if she had known one or two. Give a dog a bad name and hang him. She was conscious of looking extremely alluring in her geranium pink peignoir and slippers and her silk nightgown cut very low and her thick, black hair, which fluffed out over her shoulders, rather like that of a Russian prima ballerina.

"There's no news," she said. "The faithful Mrs. Keene gave me a good deal of worry, poor, little soul, and Malcolm Fraser has not been a very entertaining companion. He's by way of not liking me."

Franklin laughed. "Why? He likes everybody."

"Because I don't like him, I suppose. I never get on very well with poets at any time. They always seem to belong to the cherub family,— cut off at the shoulders, I mean, and surrounded with Christmas card clouds."

Franklin laughed again. "You should see him whipping a trout stream or crawling after deer."

"Mrs. Keene's in the next room," said Mrs. Larpent, warningly. Would he take the hint and be a little less sun-parlorish?

"Is she? By Jove, yes. I mustn't make such a row. I wouldn't disturb her for anything."

No, he had missed it. She crossed one leg over the other. Rather more than a slim, white ankle showed. Well, the night was all in front of them. "It was a horrid trick, getting rid of us like that. I had just settled down on the *Galatea* and was preparing to have the first really happy time of my life. You alone among men have it in your power to do that for me, Pelham." She felt that she was hurrying a little.

"Well, the *Galatea* can be at your service again. Not yet though, I'm afraid. Malcolm and I have a plan in the back of our heads." He got up and heaved a sigh and walked about. Beatrix came back into his head at the mention of the *Galatea.* He could see her leaning against the starboard rail with the sun on her golden head and her chin held high. He would always be able to see that picture, thank God!

"Tell me about it," said Mrs. Larpent, hoping that, after all, she had not hurried too fast and that it was not her remark that made him restless. Any other man almost would have caught her meaning.

"Not yet," he said. "It isn't sufficiently formed." And then he lit a cigarette and sat down again, with a chuckle. "I can't fancy *you* in this one-eyed hole. I thought, of course, that you'd stay the night here and then take the first possible train to New York."

"Did you think what would happen to me after that?"

"No, I confess I didn't. Southampton, or some such place. Society on the beach. You said some-

thing about Southampton in the summer when you had mercy on me that time and we did the theatres. You were awfully good to me then."

She tried a daring move. "You paid me well, didn't you?"

Franklin looked as uncomfortable as he felt. He went off at a quick tangent. "I don't think I shall be in New York next fall," he said. "I may go back to South Africa."

Was he really quite so dense? she asked herself. Had he forgotten every single word of that odd talk in the Vanderdykes' library? Would she have to square up to him and blurt out the truth? What was he made of?

She would have one more try. She got up. "I must go now," she said. "It's getting late."

He got up too and opened his door. "Thanks for looking me up," he said. "It was very friendly of you."

She gave him one long, analytical look. No, she and her beauty meant nothing to him. He was not teasing her into a few uncontrolled hysterical words. He was simply a big, naïve, unsuspicious man who thought nothing but good of her. She deserved better than this. She had never had any luck. And she loved this man.

She said "Good night" lightly and passed him with a fleeting smile. But in her own room she flung herself face down on her bed and cried badly.

Franklin hurled off his dressing gown and switched off the light. But in front of his eyes as he lay in the

dark he could see Beatrix ankle-deep in a blue sea, with the sun on her red bathing cap, clad in tights, like a boy.

On her way out of Mrs. Keene's room Beatrix saw Ida Larpent leave Franklin's. Someone seemed to have thrown a stone at her heart.

XXXVIII

Ida Larpent did not appear at the breakfast table.

Not for many years had she permitted herself to enjoy the luxury of tears. It was true that, since she had been flung on her own resources and faced with the disagreeable necessity of fighting her own battles, there had been many hours when tears would have helped her and made her more human. She had refused herself the indulgence for two reasons. She had no sympathy with what she called weakness and she shuddered at the idea of spoiling her appearance, even temporarily, by swollen lids. Her beauty was her only asset, her only stock-in-trade, and she preserved it with the eager and consistent care of a leading actress. But Nature had been too strong for her and she had capitulated like an ordinary woman for once. She had given herself up to an orgy of disappointment, wounded vanity, anger and bitterness, and after the storm was over had spent the rest of the night trying to see into the future, balancing her account with Fate. She was not in immediate need of money. Franklin's generosity had put her on her feet for the time being. She had paid her pressing bills and could face the remainder of the year without anxiety. But there were other years. What of them? Her small capital saved from the wreck that she had made of the fond and foolish Clive's affairs had gone. It was cer-

tain that she had miscalculated the sort of man that Franklin was. Not having been able to "get him" under what, with most men, would have been the most favorable circumstances, she saw so little chance of binding him to her and claiming some sort of protection that she came to the conclusion that she must give him up. She had played Venus to his Adonis and failed. It was not pride that made her retire from the game but the flat knowledge that he could do without her. Once more then she must go back into the Street of Adventure and lay her snares for a rich man, young or old. One satisfaction was here, and this was inconsistent with her materialism. It was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

Beatrix *did* appear at the breakfast table.

She too, had had a bad night. The shock of seeing Ida Larpent coming out of Franklin's room was awful. She sat for an hour chilled to the bone. After having loved no one but herself, and grown accustomed to the habit of merely touching a bell to procure the earth, it was startling enough suddenly to wake and find that the earth meant nothing to her without the man who did not seem to need her. In itself that was so much a shock that her whole perspective was shattered and out of focus. And even if Franklin only liked her as a sister, which gave her sufficient suffering, she loved him and had surrounded him with a girlish halo of idealism which of all things did not admit the possibility of such a visit as she had witnessed.

No one would have imagined who saw her and

heard her laugh that morning that she had sat in the dark for many hours with life lying all smashed about her like a beautiful stained glass window through which a shell had burst. She joined Franklin and Malcolm at breakfast with her chin higher than ever, readier than usual with banter and mischief, the embodiment of youth, health and careless joy. Her pride came to her rescue and she intended to live up to Franklin's estimate of her courage to her last gasp. The difference between Ida Larpent and Beatrix was breeding.

She found the two men on the veranda outside the dining-room,— Franklin smoking his inevitable pipe.

"Good morning," she said. Her ringing voice turned them both around. "Malcolm, if you don't write a long and terrible poem on the early morning noises of the country, I shall. Even New York with the explosions in the subway and the rattle of motor buses is a city of the dead compared with this place. Cocks began to scream at each other before daybreak, hens have been brawling for hours and the gobble of turkeys under my window has been worse than an election meeting. Is Mrs. Larpent down yet?"

"We've not seen her," said Franklin.

"I'm ten minutes late, am I not?"

"About that, but it doesn't matter," said Malcolm.

"I know it doesn't, but ten minutes' grace is enough even for a woman, so let's go in and eat." And she led the way into the bleak dining-room, as glad as a school-girl at the chance of being able to get a little bit back, a very little bit, from Ida Larpent.

The waiters were almost ludicrously obsequious and

rolled their eyes towards Franklin with the nervousness of pet monkeys.

"How's Mrs. Keene?" Both men asked the question together.

"Up and about," said Beatrix. "A little weak, of course, but otherwise well. Her trouble was wholly mental. Left alone with Pelham on a yacht, she was convinced that, in order to preserve my honor, as she puts it, I should have to jump overboard. Poor, dear, little affectionate Brownie. If only she had taken the trouble to find out the sort of a man Pelham is she wouldn't have turned a hair."

Malcolm laughed. "Is that meant to be complimentary or reproachful?"

She saw that Franklin was watching her keenly. "Both," she said, with a little bow, and sailed on before he could butt in. "I gave her a faithful account of everything that happened and she is beginning to believe, very reluctantly, that her favorite women novelists don't know anything about men. And now what we both want to know is this. Where are we going, how are we going and how soon are we going, or are we all going to spend the remainder of our lives in this rural retreat to make a study of frogs, farmyards and fogginess?"

Franklin was silent for a moment. This was the old Beatrix. This was the Beatrix of New York, the careless, superficial, sarcastic Beatrix of the house party at the Vanderdykes' palace. What a fool he had been to imagine that he was the man appointed to enable Miss Honoria to give thanks to God! "The

Galatea will anchor off this place this afternoon," he said. "Malcolm and I will see you and your staff off to New York on the night train."

"And where do you intend to go?"

"To Europe," he said.

"Is that definitely arranged?"

"Quite. Malcolm and I settled it just now. He will spend a year or so pottering about London, Paris and Rome and I shall go back to Africa."

With a mighty effort Beatrix held herself under absolute control. "But what about the party at Sherry's during Christmas week?"

"Scratched," said Franklin, shortly.

"I see. Well, now we know, don't we? And that's something. How long, exactly, do you propose that I shall remain a grass widow?"

"That," said Franklin, "is entirely up to you."

A bell-boy came in, rumbled grinning up to Beatrix and handed her a telegram. She took it. "Will you allow me?" she asked, and tore it open. A curious smile played round her lips as she read it over several times. "No," she said, "it isn't entirely up to me," and gave it to Franklin.

And what he read was this. "Ask Pelham to bring you home as soon as possible. No one is ill but we are all greatly perturbed by amazing rumors and daily anonymous letters. A consultation is necessary. Much love. Honoria Vanderdyke."

"H'm," said Franklin. "Sutherland York at work. May I show this to Malcolm?"

"Of course," said Beatrix.

Malcolm's remark, gravely spoken, was "Scandal again."

"Yes, we are back again at the beginning," said Franklin.

Beatrix pushed back her chair and got up and went out. As she stood on the veranda with the sun on her golden head there was not anxiety in her eyes, but triumph. If she really knew Franklin he would not desert her at this new crisis. He would not go to Europe and to South Africa. He would not consider only himself.

He came out almost at once and gave her the telegram. "You may want to keep this," he said, and stood in front of her for orders.

"Thanks,— yes."

They looked eagerly at each other, hoping against hope that there was something in all this, something more than mere accident, something which it was not for them to pry into or understand, that was to bring them as close as only love can bring a man and a woman.

"Well?"

And Franklin echoed her. "Well?"

They mutually wished to God that they were different, of better stuff and more worth while.

"It's for you to speak," she said.

"You were right about the feeling that something was going to happen to-day."

She nodded and put the telegram in her pocket. It didn't seem to matter much what the outcome of it was going to be.

"We must all go back on the *Galatea* to-night," he went on.

"You will alter your plans for me? You will stand by me again?"

He gave a queer sort of laugh. "You didn't call me a sportsman for nothing," he said.

XXXIX

New York again,— tired, hot, irritable New York. A New York in the summer, careless of her appearance like an overworked woman with a too large family and, in consequence, a trifle blowsy, with stringy hair and a rather dirty skirt.

Four cars drove away from the river which lay glistening beneath an afternoon sun.

"Well," said Beatrix, sitting back, "all we need to make the procession really noticeable is a mounted policeman, a band and a banner."

Franklin laughed and looked over his shoulder. Following them came Mrs. Lester Keene alone in all her glory with the smaller cases. Behind her, apparently not on speaking terms, Helene and the valet with a collection of hat and shoe boxes. Finally an open touring car piled high with luggage.

"What tune would you suggest for the band?"

"There'd be a nice touch of irony in 'See the Conquering Hero Comes,'" she said. "Don't you think so?"

"Quite nice." He congratulated himself upon becoming an excellent actor.

"And now tell me a few things. What about the *Galatea?*"

"Oh, she'll remain in commission," said Franklin. "McLeod is going home for a few days and the first

officer will be in charge. Malcolm will stay aboard too. I shall let him know what happens."

"Why didn't you bring him with us?"

"Don't you think he might have been in the way?"

"And where's Mrs. Larpent going?"

"Home first and then to Southampton, I believe."

"I forgot to say good-bye to her in the hurry of getting away from the yacht," said Beatrix, hoping never to see her again.

"I thought you would," said Franklin, a little dryly. His mind went back to the strained and uncomfortable return trip during which Beatrix and Ida Larpent had instinctively avoided each other as much as possible. He couldn't for the life of him make out why.

"She's very beautiful," said Beatrix, as though she were talking about a view or a horse.

"Yes, but better than that," said Franklin. "She's a good sort."

And Beatrix changed the conversation abruptly. "Dear little Brownie! It was very thoughtful of her to insist on riding alone."

"Probably imagined that you and I had plenty to talk about."

"Have we?"

"I suppose so, but I don't know where to begin."

And after that there was silence, for which both of them were glad. This was the first time since leaving the one-eyed place with its frogs and chickens that they had been alone. During the return trip on the *Galatea* they had both tacitly agreed that no purpose could be served by being together more than was necessary.

Beatrix had kept Malcolm at her side consistently. She confided nothing, spoke little and pretended to read one of Jones's novels, keeping her false brilliance for lunch and dinner. Malcolm, glad to believe that for some unfathomable reason his companionship was necessary, stretched himself out in a deck chair and wrote masses of *vers libre*. When inspiration failed he surreptitiously watched Beatrix and wondered why her eyes were nearly always on the horizon with a wistfulness that worried him. Once or twice it flashed across his mind that she loved his friend and was hiding the fact because of pride, and the excitement of the thought drove every other idea out of his head. But when he saw that her manner to Franklin was cheery and devil-may-care and boyish,— that word seemed right to him,— he dismissed it. "No such luck," he said to himself and went on being quiet when he sensed that she wished for quietude and broke into voluble conversation when it seemed to him that she silently asked him to chatter.

He was a lazy fellow, was Malcolm Fraser, a happy-go-lucky procrastinating young-old man, was this very dear chap, to whom the mere passing of time counted for little so that it passed pleasantly and who seemed to be content to absorb the color of life and revel in the pageantry of Nature. But he had been born a poet and one fine day, when he took himself seriously, ceased to be impressionistic and settled down to work, his God-sent sympathy, the milk of human kindness, of which he was full, and the exquisite imagery that he had been collecting as a bee gathers honey, would

put him among the few men whose verse fills a hard world with music and gives back to wounded souls that gift of faith without which life is a hollow and a useless episode.

All the way back Mrs. Larpent had kept to her own room, giving out that she was unwell,— as indeed she was. Her mind was sick, and her body disappointed. Franklin had told her the truth, she was obliged to own, when he said that he loved Beatrix. There was no accounting for tastes and it seemed to her that a man might infinitely better give his heart like a toy to a toy-surfeited child than to this young autocrat.

And so Franklin had found companionship with Captain McLeod, the first officer, and — it was enough to make a cat laugh — with Mrs. Lester Keene. He spent hours trying to make the time pass a little pleasantly for the elderly woman who was, he knew, anxious, frightened and full of conscientious but wholly unnecessary self-reproach. They became good friends before the yacht dropped her anchor off her usual moorings,— even they. One of Mrs. Keene's resolutions was that, in future, she would revise her novel-made opinion of men. That was something to have achieved, had Franklin only known it.

Through the mostly ugly, but sometimes queerly beautiful and always unique city they went together, Franklin and Beatrix followed by their entourage, and it came to them both that, in returning to the house in which they had joined forces in a manner that now appeared to them to be inconceivable, they were completing a curious and a useless circle. They had under-

gone strange feelings, placed themselves into difficult and dangerous situations, disconnected themselves from the irresponsibility, the right to which was theirs by inheritance, given up an individualism that was part and parcel of their training and environment, and all for what? To return discontented, disappointed and dispirited to the spot from which they had set out. He loved her and would lay his life at her feet and she loved him and would gladly be his servant, and both, being alike and having the same want of confidence when it came to the fundamentals, had not found it out. Fate had played a pretty game with these two for having dared to tamper with her. And, oddly enough, Ida Larpent was the only one of the characters in this little comedy from which she had made her exit who had guessed what Fate had done and now peeked through the cracks in the scenery to see how it was going to end. And she, being a worldling, suspicious of humanity, was not prepared to make a guess.

"Well," said Beatrix at last, gathering herself together. "We're almost there. In for a very amusing evening, if I know my respected and respectable family."

Franklin turned and looked at her. There was something in her voice,— a sort of school-girl note, the note of a high spirited young thing who had broken bounds and been discovered and faced punishment,— that made him shoot out a laugh.

"Why laugh?" she asked. She never tolerated being laughed at.

"You'd make a rattlesnake chortle." He laughed again.

"Look out, or I *may* hit you," she said. "It's one of the things that makes my arm utterly irresponsible."

He made a gesture that was almost French. "You beat me," he said. "By Jove, you beat me."

"If you'd beaten *me* it might have been different," she snapped back at him.

"One doesn't beat you," said Franklin. "God made you and that's the end of it, I find. No argument, as a man I know always says when the rain has set in for the day or a bottle's empty. You are you, kiddie, and so are the sun, the moon and the stars."

"You're a fool," she cried, "a fool, a fool!" And then she put her hand quickly over her mouth. What kind of a fool would *she* look if she allowed herself to fling out even the beginning of what was in her mind?

"I knew that five minutes after I grinned like a Cheshire cheese and posed before your people as the sheepish husband. All the same it was worth it, here and there." He was damned if he'd give himself away either.

"I think so too," she said.

The car turned and went through the great iron gates.

"I shall like the *Galatea* all the better because you've touched her," he said.

She laughed because her lips insisted on trembling. "I suppose you asked Malcolm to give you that. Don't you think one poet in the family's enough? There's mother's machine-made hair and Aunt

Honoria's perfect nose and dear old daddy's kind but suspicious eyes. 'It's all right in the wintertime but in the summertime it's awful.'" She sang these pathetic words beneath her breath and waved her hand to the waiting family with an air of superb confidence and affection.

He didn't laugh again. Metaphorically he took off all his hats to her and laid them at her feet.

XL

The perfect Mrs. Vanderdyke, fresh from the manipulations of her constant time-fighters, arranged herself on the top step of the house. With a light, controlling touch she placed her husband on her right and her sister-in-law on her left, so that, viewed from below, they should be exactly framed in the elaborate doorway. She did this, as she did everything, with a self-conscious sense of the decorative, of being like royalty, in the public eye, of standing before an imaginary battery of masked cameras as the chief representative of American high society.

It was a good picture, she knew, and one of which her country might well feel proud. She was quite satisfied with her own appearance. Her head, which had taken an hour to dress, was a work of art. She wore no hat. After some consideration she had come to the conclusion that a hat would spoil the intimate, home-like effect that she desired to achieve. Her face, strangely un-lined and immobile, had the faintest touch of color. Her chin, held high in order that there should not be the mere suggestion of sag, certainly gave her the appearance of gargling, but what did that matter? Her dress, which had almost broken a woman's heart, gave her youth. Of her sister-in-law she felt proud. She added the right note of dignity

and autumnal beauty, with her white hair and eagle nose and unconscious grace. She wished that her husband had taken more pains with his clothes and had put up a better fight with elderliness but, after all, he was Vanderdyke and a man.

She was pleased with the way in which Franklin helped Beatrix out of the car and, going down two steps, she welcomed the daughter of whom she knew absolutely nothing as though she were a rather interesting and important relation. "How well you look, dear Beatrix," she said, in a voice which gave the impression of having been as well massaged as her face. She placed a light kiss on the girl's cheek. "But I've never seen you so sunburned before," she added reproachfully.

"The simple life, Mother," said Beatrix, knowing that her satire was wasted. She put her arms round her father's neck. "How are you, Daddy darling? Glad to see me?"

Mr. Vanderdyke, whose to-days were just as monotonous and uninspired as his yesterdays, was unexpectedly emotional. He held his only child closely and kissed her several times and said, "My dear, my dear," a little brokenly. His little girl was returning from her honeymoon. It might mean so much in the history of the family.

And then it was Aunt Honoria's turn. With eager tenderness and pride she gathered into her warm arms the girl she would have given so much to own. Her broken romance lived again at that moment. Her eyes were blurred with tears.

Not her father and not her mother gave Beatrix a sudden feeling of being a fraud and an impostor, but this kind, sweet woman whose silence was so eloquent. How different everything might have been if only *she* had been her mother!

With what she intended to be marked cordiality Mrs. Vanderdyke gave both her hands to Franklin, who had never been so uncomfortable in his life. She wanted to convey to him the fact that even in the face of rumors and anonymous letters she believed in him. "My dear Pelham," she said, "it is kind of you to cut your honeymoon so short in deference to our wishes."

"Not at all," replied Franklin. He pulled himself up as he was about to add, "I'm only too delighted."

Mr. Vanderdyke seemed anxious to support his wife. "My dear fellow," he said, "my dear fellow," and stuck.

Franklin returned his grip. "I'm awfully glad to see you, sir," he said. "Er — what stunning weather." He caught the impish look which Beatrix darted at him and gave it up.

"My dear lad," said Aunt Honoria, so kindly and with a smile that was so maternal that Franklin put her hand to his lips. It was only as they all went into the hall that he turned cold under the realization that he was little better than a cheat among these people. All the same, with one refreshing glance at Beatrix, whose impression of half-shy, half-defiant young wifehood was amazingly perfect, he played the son-in-law to the best of his ability.

Once more they were back, these two, in the place where life had taken a sudden and astonishing twist. Months seemed to have gone by since they had been there before.

"The Bannermans, Mrs. Gordon and Ethel, the Duc de la Faucheroucould and Roy Stanton have been staying," said Mrs. Vanderdyke. "By a very lucky chance we shall be alone to-night and to-morrow. We will have a family council after dinner."

Beatrix looked at Franklin over her father's shoulder, and drew down the corners of her mouth. No, he was not the man to make her take things seriously.

Mr. Vanderdyke let out some of the uneasiness that he had done his best to disguise during the welcome. "I wish I'd acted on my intuition to telephone to my lawyer," he said petulantly. "Eventually we shall have to take legal advice, I feel sure."

Aunt Honoria broke in. "Now, now," she said, "we agreed not to go into this matter until our young people had settled down. It is far too serious to take up in a desultory manner. Personally, my opinion is that as soon as Pelham has all the facts and has dined well and is smoking a cigar he will bring his practicality to bear and possibly do away with any recourse to the law. I have great confidence in Pelham," and she smiled at him in a way that made him cold again.

And then Mrs. Lester Keene came in and was greeted graciously by the two ladies.

Beatrix went across casually to Franklin. "What

on earth has happened?" she asked, in an anxious whisper.

"I wish I knew," he whispered back.

"Do you feel curious? I do."

He nodded gravely. Beatrix and scandal,— they were never meant to run in double harness.

And then the imp of mischief that was never very far away from Beatrix took its old accustomed place on her shoulder, and her eyes began to dance. "I'm not surprised at my family's confidence in you," she said. "There's something in your appearance that could win you orders even for an encyclopedia. What fills me with surprise and amusement is the confidence they seem to feel in *me*. That's quite new."

"Not so loud," he said.

She sent out a ripple of laughter. "Well, you certainly are practical. That, I know."

"Do you?"

"Don't I?" She looked straight into his eyes and her laughter ceased.

Mrs. Vanderdyke joined them. "You have twenty minutes for a little rest before you dress for dinner, Beatrix. You must be tired after your hot drive."

"No, Mother, thanks," said Beatrix airily. "Pelham talked all the way here and was so merry and bright that the journey seemed short." But she went upstairs to the suite that he would never forget, and her little touch of sarcasm found its mark.

"Come into my room," said Mr. Vanderdyke, "and we'll smoke a cigarette."

Franklin followed him.

It was a curious room in which he presently found himself,— a room which gave a pathetic keynote to the character and life of the man who spent so many hours in it. Very large and lofty, it was crammed with ideas at which he appeared to have made a beginning, dabbled in and wearied of. There were leather-bound manuscript books in dozens, several of which had labels on the back,—"Notes on Old China," "Impressions of European Labor Conditions," "Butterflies," "Songs and Sonnets," "A Life of Russell Vanderdyke, Book I.," "Trout Streams," "The Improvement of Factories,"— it would have taken an hour to examine them all. The note of the dilettante was everywhere,— in the pieces of rare silver that were mixed with old pottery, Japanese lacquer, Jacobean chests, Oriental curios, ancient Bibles, first editions, faded prints, modern etchings, and one or two appalling examples of so-called Cubist work which appealed to Franklin merely as pervertism or the attempt of men who had never been taught to paint to illustrate delirium tremens. It was the room of a man of confirmed irresolution, of an inherited lack of grip, of an intellect that was as unconcentrated as a flight of pigeons. It showed a scattering of interest that could only belong to some-one who had never felt the splendid urge of achieving an object in the face of dire necessity. It provided the most unobservant eye with a complete history of an ambitious but vacillating life. It conveyed to workers the impression of many acres of dead-level ground long ago carefully staked out as a garden city, with neat boards indicating here an

avenue, here a public library, here a country club, here a huge hotel, here a railroad station, all very neat and well weeded but without the fulfilment of one single promise.

Franklin didn't get the feeling of the room at once. It seemed to him to be rather intimate though somewhat uninhabitable. It was only while Mr. Vanderdyke was talking in his vague impersonal way that the pathetic incompleteness of it all came to him and hit him hard. Good Heavens, what if he, too, dwindled, for the same reason, into a similar dabbler! What if he, too, scattered away his life with the same kind of uselessness!

He was glad to get away to change and to think. He was pretty certain that the time was near, whatever might be the way out of the maze that he was in with Beatrix, for him to do a good deal of thinking. He was pretty certain that when he left the Vanderdyke house alone,— he couldn't see how else he could leave it,— the effect that Beatrix had had upon him would impel him to hitch himself on to life in some other capacity than that of a mere observer. For her sake, in her honor, he would dedicate his life to a job that should relieve the pressure in some way on the toilers of the earth and help things forward.

When he returned to the hall he found the punctual, punctilious family ready and waiting to go into dinner. Beatrix followed him down almost immediately, wearing a simple and charming frock. Aunt Honoria met her and brought her into the group. There was something about the girl, a new dignity, a riper air, an un-

characteristic quietude that was caught at once by the three Vanderdykes and especially by Aunt Honoria. Her words to Franklin in the garden before the honeymoon came back into her mind and with an emotion that she was unable to suppress she said, "This is a good night in the history of the family. Our little girl has found herself as we have prayed that she would. I speak for my brother and sister when I say that we are grateful to you, Pelham." She bowed to him with old-fashioned grace.

Mr. Vanderdyke, obviously disconcerted, murmured approval, and Mrs. Vanderdyke smiled. She was a little resentful of the way in which Aunt Honoria always took the lead but this was outweighed by her immense relief at the fact that Beatrix was happy and disposed of.

Franklin was the most uncomfortable man on earth.

And then Beatrix did a thing that once more made him wish that they were back in the stone age. "Let me speak for myself," she said quietly. "Pelham, I am very grateful, too," and put her hand on his shoulder, stood on tiptoes and kissed him.

He was wrong, once more, when he told himself, angrily, that she was deliberately fooling, getting a thrill of amusement at his expense. If he had known her as she was now, he would have realized that she had seized the public moment to do something she would not have dared to do privately, that she was thanking him for what he had done for her and saying "Good-bye." She had made up her mind to tell the truth at the family council that night.

XLI

While Helene had been brushing her hair and getting her ready for dinner Beatrix had gone in for honest thinking too.

She came at once to the conclusion that from every point of view the sham that she had created in that wild moment of self-preservation and devil-may-care must be smashed. Scandal had driven her into it. Scandal was following at her heels and in a blaze of scandal the episode must end. The futile punishment, which, as a girl, she had been so keen to dodge mattered nothing to her now as a woman. Let Aunt Honoria drag her into the back of beyond. She would go gladly. In silent lonely places she could sit in dreams and live over again those wonderful moments during which she had burst into womanhood. What did it matter now if she missed a season, many seasons in New York? She had looked into the eyes of life. She had no longer any desire to take her part among the silly sheep that ran about in droves. She was sorry for the pain and humiliation that she must cause her family to suffer. There seemed to be no way to prevent that. To enter into Franklin's scheme of marriage only meant a postponement of scandal. Divorce would provide the gossipers with an even more succulent morsel than the one that was waiting

for them. Out of this smash, bad as it must be, she would at any rate preserve her pride and set Franklin free.

There were three things that hit her hard as she sat in front of her looking glass that evening. Her failure to make Franklin eat the words that he had flung at her vanity as he stood at the foot of her bed. Her failure to turn the sex attraction that she had deliberately stirred in him into love. Her failure to compete with such a woman as Ida Larpent. In fact it was the word failure that seemed to her to be written all over the episode into which she had entered without a thought for anyone except herself,— and it was the one word which had, till then, never been allowed to have a place in her dictionary.

It was a bad hour that she went through as she summed things up, and she came out of it startled at the knowledge that she, even she, was required to pay for her mistakes to the uttermost cent.

Well, she *would* pay and pay smiling. She would prove to Franklin that he was right when he said that she had courage.

Dinner was a rather pompous, long drawn out affair, watched, as usual, by several of Romney's rosy-cheeked men, a beautiful Gainsborough woman, and a Reynolds' legal luminary, cynical beneath a heavy wig. Conversation was conducted, rather than allowed to run easily, through the superfluous courses. The butler, with the air of a bishop, held an aloof place in the background and silent-footed men-servants hovered like hawks over the shoulders of the diners.

To Mr. Vanderdyke dinner was an institution, the land-mark in his vacant days. He trained for it with assiduous care and self-restraint, enjoyed it with his characteristic halfheartedness and took his punishment and his tabloids as a matter of course. To Mrs. Vanderdyke it was a severe temptation which, for the most part, she resisted with great pluck. The smallest increase of weight meant hours of treatment. Aunt Honoria just ate and let it go at that and so did Franklin, whose appetite was the envy and wonder of many of his less healthy friends. Beatrix pecked a little and said a little but smiled at everybody. She was keeping up the bluff until her cards were called.

How different and how wonderful it would all have been if instead of acting parts she and Franklin were playing them in reality!

After the ladies had left Franklin smoked a cigarette with Mr. Vanderdyke and did his best to show interest in his host's rather petulant criticisms of the ways and methods of the Government. He was very glad to follow him into the drawing-room in whose stiff immensity the ladies were almost lost.

He went straight up to Mrs. Vanderdyke, who was leaning on a Tudor mantelpiece, torn from Little Claverings in Essex. She always stood for twenty minutes after dinner. It was part of her régime. "I'm very keen to hear what there is to be told, Mrs. Vanderdyke," he said. "May we get to it now?"

"Isn't it a little early yet?" Mrs. Vanderdyke turned to Aunt Honoria, who was talking to Beatrix.

The energy of this tall, tanned man was a little disconcerting. "Will you ——"

"I have everything here," said Aunt Honoria, "and I agree with Pelham that there is no time like the present. I have given orders that we are on no account to be disturbed. You will sit down, won't you?"

Mrs. Vanderdyke did so, having glanced at the clock. Mr. Vanderdyke lay back in a low chair with the fingers of his long, thin hands together. He would far rather have been in the hands of a dentist than in that room at that time. Franklin sat bolt upright next to Beatrix, who had her metaphorical bomb all ready to throw into the middle of the group. Only to these two did the underlying drama of this curious meeting appeal fully.

And then Aunt Honoria opened the proceedings quietly, calmly and with all the dignity of which she was a mistress. "I have here," she said, "a bundle of anonymous letters and a cutting from a scurrilous paper. The first letter came addressed to me. Others are written to my brother and sister, and there are half a dozen which were sent to intimate friends of ours and placed in my hands by them. They are all in the same handwriting, which looks to me as though it were disguised. They began to arrive the morning after you left on your honeymoon, my dear, and have come every morning since. They take the form of a series of questions. This is the first one. "Have you taken the trouble to discover at which Church or registry your niece Beatrix and Pelham Franklin were married?" And then they run in this order. You

will see that I have copied them out. "What will you do when you find that your daughter, who imagines herself to belong to the salt of the earth, is a common wanton and liar? What will you do to repair the damage that she has done to your prestige in society by humbugging the papers into printing the story of a marriage that never took place? How is it that sophisticated people of your type have accepted a man as a son-in-law without evidence of his legal right to call himself so? Do you think you set a good example to all the people who copy your ways and manners by allowing your daughter to go on the loose with any man she takes a fancy to? Have you a grudge against society in which you assume a leading position and have you made yourselves party to an unmoral and disgraceful transaction in order to hold it up to the ridicule of the world? Would you speak to a young girl, however well-born and wealthy, who to hide a love affair with one man bluffed a marriage with a mere acquaintance? What decent man will marry your daughter after she has been 'honeymooning' with another? Don't you know that truth will out and that already tongues are busy with the names of Vanderdyke and Franklin? Aren't you sufficiently worldly to have learned that people who condone are classed with people who commit? Why not, if you have been as gullible as press and public, set things right and make what reparation you can to the members of your class? Do you want the name of Beatrix Vanderdyke to be placed among those of notorious chorus girls? Why not at once institute a search

among the registrations of marriages and force the guilty couple, now basking in the light of a mock honeymoon, to confession and penitence?"

"Don't go on, don't go on," cried Mr. Vanderdyke. "I can't stand it, I tell you. I can't stand it!" His voice was almost hysterical and his gesture almost feminine.

"These dreadful questions," said Mrs. Vanderdyke, in a low voice, "give me mental sickness."

Franklin sat quite still, with his hands clenched.

Beatrix looked as though she had been turned to stone. Had all these hideous things grown out of one impetuous moment?

"I will gladly pass over the rest," said Aunt Honoria, "and come to the cutting from the paper that was sent to me three days ago. This," she added in a voice that became suddenly sharp with anger, "calls for immediate action, Pelham, and is the reason of your being here to-night."

"Please read it," said Franklin.

Aunt Honoria read, holding the clipping as though it held contamination. It was written in the usual smart manner with the usual lascivious snigger. "There is a very precious high life scandal in the offing, so to speak,— one which will, it is said on the best authority, flutter the dovecotes of all our Best Families. Much satisfaction was recently expressed, and gallons of ink expended in fulsome congratulation, upon the marriage of a well-known amateur yachtsman to the beautiful and adventurous daughter of a multimillionaire. No recent royal marriage was more

widely commented upon. It is rumored, however, that the high-spirited young lady who, even as a débutante had shown a certain lofty disregard for the conventions, is now conducting an ultra-modern experiment with the good-looking amateur yachtsman by honeymooning with him before the legal prescription has been made out, with the view, perhaps, to ultimate marriage. This sort of thing has been perpetrated, it is true, though without any attempt to mislead the public, by persons of artistic temperament and no social position to lose, but the question is being very generally asked as to how this peculiar proceeding will presently be viewed by American Society, which still clings to one or two hard and fast standards. I shall certainly watch the outcome with immense curiosity and shall be especially interested to see how soon the matrons on and near Fifth Avenue will show how the wind is blowing in their treatment of a certain member of the girl's family who has constituted herself the guide and mentor of her set for many years."

Although he had read this cunningly offensive thing over many times, Mr. Vanderdyke squirmed in his chair and put one hand over his eyes. His fastidious and beautiful wife, usually too self-centered to be concerned with the troubles of other people, gave him a glance of very genuine sympathy. It had been the fetish of them both to regard convention as a sort of religion, and she knew, unable herself to translate her indignation and disgust into words, how deeply her husband took this utterly undeserved scurrility to heart. Like him and like Aunt Honoria she had no suspicion

of there being anything in the least out of order in the marriage.

Beatrix still sat as though she had been turned to stone.

But Franklin got up. This poisonous collection of sniggering words made him see red. Oh, God, for five minutes with that fat brute York! He walked up and down, watched with grim satisfaction by the family, especially by Mr. Vanderdyke, who poked himself up on his elbow and with a flush on his face and an eager light in his pale eyes saw in that tall, wiry, sun-burned man all the symptoms of an overwhelming desire for the sort of physical vengeance in which he himself would never be able to indulge.

Franklin got himself under control, stood in front of the fireplace and asked himself what he was going to do. The moment had come when he could get free of the girl who tortured his lonely hours and compelled his adoration and was further away than Heaven. In a few words he could give her people, who deserved most of the blame, the story of the result of spoiling. Should he seize it? Should he cut loose from an empty tie and become his own master again? Once, at school, he had been summoned before the Head Master to give evidence against Malcolm Fraser, who had broken bounds. He had lied through his teeth to save his friend. Under the eyes of these people the feeling came back to him and pervaded him like a perfume that he was standing again in the sanctum of that stern, old task-master. Not for a friend this time, not for a man who could take his punishment and

grin, but for a girl who would be stained in the sight of unbelievers, the girl of all living girls whom he loved beyond words and whom, under any circumstances, he must hold, he would lie himself black in the face to defend. That was settled. It was almost laughable to have supposed that there had been any other solution. He turned. There was a curious smile in his eyes. "What is your proposition?" he asked.

Aunt Honoria took a sheet of note paper from the little table at her elbow. There was something about this man Franklin that reminded her of the one who had taken her heart with him beyond the outpost of eternity. With some difficulty she steadied her voice. "When we first read that paragraph with its abominable suggestiveness," she said, "we had no intention of being drawn into making a statement. We agreed that it would be undignified. But since then, having talked of nothing else, we have come to the conclusion that we must send something to the leading papers. What we suggest is this, if it meets with your approval."

"Please read it." He noticed that Beatrix was opening and closing her hands as though she had pins and needles.

"My brother drew this up and he left the spaces for you to fill in, Pelham." Aunt Honoria then read the statement which her brother had written and re-written at least a dozen times. "'From the recent account of the romantic and closely-guarded marriage of Miss Beatrix Vanderdyke and Mr. Pelham Franklin pub-

lished by us we omitted to give the name of the church in which it was celebrated and the date of the ceremony. 'The Church was ——— and the date ———.' All you have to do is to fill in the facts and I will send the necessary copies to town to-night by messenger. If this doesn't put an end to letters and paragraphs we must then claim the protection of the law."

Franklin took the sheet of paper. All he had to do was to fill in the facts! Ye Gods, what was he to do with the thing? He glanced at Beatrix. She still seemed to be half frozen. No help was to be had from her. He must put forward a good objection and a good alternative at once. "I think that your first idea was the right one," he said. "This statement is a confession of weakness. I want you, if you will, to leave the whole thing to me. I know the man who's written those letters. It will give me immense pleasure to deal with him. One visit to the office of that paper will settle the editor's hash." He spoke with all the confidence that he could master and smiled at the three Vanderdykes, who seemed to hang on his words. "And, after all, this is entirely my affair. Beatrix is my wife and it is for me and no one else to protect her."

Beatrix, now fully alive, sprang to her feet. "No," she said, "it's not your affair. It's mine, and it's for me to put an end to it."

All eyes were turned on her,— the Vanderdykes' with some surprise. Franklin's with quick apprehension. She was going to give the show away, he saw. At all costs she must be stopped. With what he tried

to make a newly-married smile he took her hand and scrunched it so that she nearly screamed with pain. "There's going to be a friendly argument between us," he said. "Would you permit us to conduct it out in the air?" And before another word could be said by anybody he put his arm around Beatrix's waist, controlled her to one of the open French windows and out under the sky.

"What do you mean by this?" she cried angrily.

He held her tight. "You were going to give yourself away."

"Yes, I was." She tried to shake him off. "And I will."

"No, you won't, if I have to gag you, you won't."

She gave her hand a violent wrench. "Let me go. I've had enough of it."

Instead of which he stooped down, picked her up in his arms, carried her down the terrace steps and through the sleeping garden to the tea house overlooking the Sound. Here he put her down and stood in front of her, ready to catch her again if she tried to escape. In that place, not so long ago, he had found her impossible.

"Now, then," he said, "come to cues."

She gave a scoffing laugh. "What is all this? An attempt to play the primeval man, or what?"

"Be sarcastic if you like," he said. "I don't care. Be anything you please, but play the game. You started it."

"Play the game!" she echoed, blazing with anger. "That's exactly what I was going to do."

"I don't agree with you."

"What do I care whether you agree or not?"

"I'm going to make you care."

"Make me? You? Have you ever been able to make me do one single thing?"

"This is where I begin. Sit down."

"I won't sit down." He put her into a chair and stood over her. He was in no mood for conventionality.

"Dear me, how strong we are!" she said, like a rude little girl.

"Impertinence is wasted on me to-night. So try something else. We're back again at the beginning of this game of yours, but to-night we start afresh."

"So far as I'm concerned the game's over."

"Yes, but what you fail to realize is that you're not the only one concerned. There's your family and there's me."

"I'm not going over all the old arguments again, I assure you. I tell you the thing is over. You may be able to prevent me from telling the truth to-night, but there's to-morrow and the day after. I'm in no immediate hurry."

"I am though, and I'm going to keep you here until you give in to me."

"Order breakfast for eight o'clock," she said calmly.

He ignored her audacity. "You will do three unforgivable things by telling the truth. You will put your people into a panic, hold me up to the ridicule of the earth and hurt your reputation beyond any sort of

repair. It isn't sporting to do the first two and I'm not going to let you do the other."

"My reputation ——" She began, and stopped. The word sporting dried up her words. It opened up a new point of view. She had harped on this word in regard to him. She held it in high respect. For the first time in their long and fluctuating struggle of temperament he had scored.

He saw it and went on quickly. "Because of your people and because of you,— I can always disappear,— I'm going to carry on your lie through thick and thin. If, when I've finished what I've got to say, you go back and tell them that you're not married to me I shall say that you're lying again. I shall be believed and I shall first break every bone in York's body and thrash the paragraphist into a hospital. Then, as soon as McLeod's had his three days' leave you, being a sportsman, will come aboard the *Galatea* with me,— Malcolm's waiting,— and we will make a bee line for the Irish Coast and get married in Queenstown. It's impossible in this country now."

"And then, what?" she asked.

"Africa for me, home for you,— or anywhere else you like."

"I see. And are you childish enough to think that this precious plan will kill scandal?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Divorce,— what of that?"

"That's a small matter. You can't get a divorce without having first been married. It's the question of marriage that we're up against."

Beatrix was silent for a moment. Her anger had gone. By the unexpected use of that one word "sporting" he had convinced her that she couldn't go back on a creed. Here was a man who had the right to enforce something to which he had lived up so splendidly. She had made her bed and must lie on it.

"May I get up?" she asked quietly.

"Please," he said, and stood back.

She went over to the wall and put her hands on it and looked out over the silent water. Was she beaten at last? Had this man broken her as well as unconsciously won her love? Was she to fail utterly in her reiterated attempt to make him eat the words that had hurt her so? Was she, in fact, quite down from the pedestal upon which every one had placed her? A rush of tears blurred her eyes,— but only for a second. She forced herself under control and looked round to see where Franklin was. He hadn't moved. He was standing where she left him,— not looking very much like a man who had won, she saw, without surprise. He was not that kind of man, she knew.

"I want you," she said.

He went over.

"Will you tell me something?"

"Anything."

She felt the blood rush into her face. "Why was Ida Larpent in your room the other night?"

He answered simply. "To smoke a cigarette and have a yarn."

One awful weight fell from her heart. "Will you say that you're sorry for that horrid thing you

flung at me about the huts and the desert island?"

He thought for a moment, remembered and laughed. "Yes," he said, "I'm sorry."

The other weight fell. There was a third, heavier than these two, that would always remain. "I will marry you," she said.

And he gave a queer groan and his hands went out to catch her and fell to his sides.

And the other weight fell with what seemed to her to be a crash that echoed all over the world. Being a woman, and a woman in love, she stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

"Don't do that," he cried out.

"Why not?" she asked softly, standing so close that the perfume of her hair made him shake. "Aren't you forcing me to be your wife?"

"No. I'm only going to make you marry me."

"Then I won't marry you," she said.

"What the devil do you mean?"

She smiled at his roughness and held up her face so that he might see what she meant in her eyes. She stood up straight, young and slim and sweet,— her whole body radiating with love and joy and triumph.

And he looked and saw, gave a great cry like a shipwrecked man who sees the shore, and held her against his heart, out there in the night, under the stars, giving praise.

XLII

"Sorry you're going to leave us, sir," said Moffat, putting a pair of shoes into a chamois bag.

"Thanks," said Malcolm.

"Mr. Franklin told me that you're going to make straight for my village, sir,— London."

The valet chuckled at his little joke.

"Yes, London for the autumn, Paris for the winter and probably back to New York for the spring."

"And very nice too, sir, I'm sure."

Malcolm went over to one of the open port-holes of his stateroom. The *Galatea* lay in the harbor of Queenstown. The setting sun lay kindly on the houses of the small Irish port that behaved as though it were the hub of the universe. In one of them, a few hours ago, he had stood in the shabby little room of the registrar of births, deaths and marriages, making a mental and never-to-be-forgotten picture of a worn, cheap desk, a worn, cheap man with a mop of grizzled hair and an absolutely expressionless face, an inkpot which looked as though it had never been cleaned, a square of green blotting paper, a dog-eared testament, and a strip of carpet across which, slanting from the door to the desk, there was a threadbare path made by the passing of feet. Births, deaths and

marriages,— they were all the same to the registrar. He had his quiet days and his busy ones. Births and deaths gave a little less trouble than marriages but they all worked out pretty much the same.

And in this picture, a startling contrast to the shabby and sordid room, stood the vital figures of Beatrix and Franklin, hand in hand, the representatives of the spirit of youth and love in that place which also registered the beginning and the end of life. The feeling and the symbolism and the beauty of this scene made their appeal to Malcolm Fraser both as a poet and a man. Here stood a man and a woman, in all the glory of youth, at the second of the three milestones. On to the third, hidden behind the curtain of spring leaves, they would now go together. God grant them the gifts of give and take and the blessed fruit of love. Here stood his friend and the woman he had loved and loved still. He wasn't losing her because he was never in the running to win. He wasn't losing him because their bond was everlasting. All was well, then. He had no complaints.

He followed his luggage on deck. Beatrix and Franklin were waiting for him. How different they looked, he thought. No wonder. They had found the way to live.

"Don't go, Mally," said Beatrix, putting an arm round his shoulder. "Send your things down again and come back with us."

"Yes," said Franklin. "Come on."

Malcolm shook his head. "Don't tempt me," he

In this picture stood the vital figures of Beatrix and Franklin, hand in hand. *Page 372.*

said. "I've been lazy long enough. I'm going to begin to work in the old cities. With any luck I'll have a thin volume ready, very expensively bound, for your golden wedding."

They all laughed. It was, somehow, a rather emotional moment. It was good to laugh.

"All ready, sir," said Jones, who regretted to be the one to put good old Peter Pan ashore.

Malcolm gave his hand to Beatrix. "God bless you, my dear," he said.

"God bless you, Mally."

"Good luck, old man."

"So long," said Franklin.

They watched him into the launch and away, waving their hands.

"Good old Malcolm!" said Franklin. "Among other things that he did for me he brought you on the *Galatea.*"

"But not for my honeymoon," said Beatrix with a little look that made his heart jump. "When do we sail?"

"As soon as Jones gets back."

"And then, where?"

"Heaven," he said.

They began to walk. The sun was slipping away. A new day was coming, a new beginning.

"I know one thing," she said.

"What's that?"

"*You* won't spoil me."

He saw the old mischievous smile lurking in her

eyes. But she escaped his eager hands and ran into her state-room.

And he followed her and shut the door.

THE END

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